

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

Wild

MORE THAN 30 YEARS OF WILDERNESS ADVENTURE HERITAGE

ISSUE
149

PADDLE TO WORK
HIKING NEW CALEDONIA
UK: SOUTH WEST COAST PATH
THE BLUE GUMS OF GROSE VALLEY
GERMANY TO AUSTRALIA BY KAYAK
FEDERATION TRACK WEST
REVIEWS: BASE LAYER LEGGINGS
KATE LEEMING'S POLAR CYCLE

Gaining an edge



Fruit from the fringe
Travelling safely by night
Quentin visits Cobbold Gorge
Mount Wellington Track Notes
Silver gulls and other seabirds

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Wild

AUSTRALIAN WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

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WARNING

The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety and equipment could result in serious injury or death.



Cover A violet sky above Hobart, as seen from Mt Wellington.
Cameron Blake

Contents Waking up to a view on Mt Tibrogargan.
Lachlan Gardiner



"I'm as mad as hell, and I'm not going to take this anymore!"

- NETWORK, 1976

A wild state of mind

In Australia, many people have the luxury of being aware of their good fortune and are generally satisfied with the status quo.

Those who are not satisfied frequently strive to make positive change, where positive change is possible. These are the positive stories we see reported and, sadly, there are many more examples that go unreported.

Unfortunately, there are also a great many people who are unsatisfied with the way things are; yet they also feel completely incapable of effecting the change they seek. Sadly, these stories are only reported when some noteworthy event occurs to highlight it (a lone sportsman hurls an invisible spear at a howling crowd), or because a researcher uncovers a fact that is so incredible that it begs to be reported (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls aged 15-19 are almost six times more likely to die by suicide than other Australians). When we hear that the government of the day has yet again ignored science and progressive values on topics including marriage equality, conservation, education and other social justice issues, one begins to wonder what can possibly be done about it. After all, wasn't all this meant to be solved in the '60s?

I sympathise with fictional news anchor Howard Beale when he exhorted his audience to turn off their TVs and to be "mad as hell" in the 1976 American classic, *Network*. Too many people have become apathetic when it comes to improving their own quality of life, let alone that of the greater community. Of course, that doesn't prevent people from having and sharing their opinions – from forming a point of view – but that should just be the starting point.

For *Wild*, that has been present for so many years and been read by so many people around the country, it's easy to understand why some of our readers feel a certain level of ownership over the title. It's that kind of passion that makes editing this magazine extremely rewarding. Yet I'm also conscious of the fact that the magazine needs to remain innovative and fresh, and so sometimes material is published that inevitably disappoints some segment of the readership.

Some believe that *Wild* was set up to cover the most challenging multi-day wilderness experiences on foot, ski or kayak/canoe, and

that's it. However, since the beginning I've found the magazine to be more about the why, not only the how, of these adventures. For that reason beginner material, conservation news, opinion and adjacent issues including science, politics and philosophy have also always been welcome within our pages. At these stories some readers will invariably turn their noses up and say they're "more mild than wild". If that's the case then I fear the point has been missed.

This issue of *Wild* strikes at the heart of this little bone of contention, as its content has been deliberately selected to follow a general theme of adventure on the fringes of civilisation. The setting may not be wild in a strict sense, but it's my belief that this title wasn't created to maintain such a narrow vision. The sad fact is that there aren't many landscapes that remain in a pristine condition anywhere in the world.

This leaves us (you and me, society, the media and everybody) with all the same questions we began with. How do we ameliorate our apathy to make things better without sacrificing more than we are willing to give? How can I get my kids out into the wilderness, get them to learn about and respect the traditional owners of our country without having to drive halfway across it? How can I become an adventurer if I don't have the thousands of dollars required to afford all the gear and travel far afield?

The responses to these questions aren't necessarily all the same, but the answers can certainly be positive if the correct attitude is present. I believe that's what *Wild* is truly about. It's about fostering this attitude, discovering a perspective beyond the confines of what society's strictures usually dictate. Therefore my recommendation to anyone reading is this: no matter where you are and what your passion is, regardless of your personal means or how much time you have, don't just heed the words of the fictional newsman. Sure, be mad as hell, but then go absolutely wild.

Campbell Phillips
-Editor

Wild

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Issue 148, Jul-Aug 2015



LETTER OF THE ISSUE
Andrew wins a Therm-a-Rest TREO valued at \$179.95. This camp chair has a realistic seat height and width so that it's no hassle to get in or out of, while still packing away into its own tripod base.

BUSHWALKING WITH KIDS

Having kids can really slow you down when it comes to enjoying outdoor pursuits, but as soon as you and your children are ready, get back into it! I'd like to share our experience of undertaking a longer bushwalk with our 13-month-old boy.

In June 2015, our young family completed the 8.5 hour return slog to the summit of Mount Dalrymple (1227m), Central Queensland's highest peak, in Eungella National Park near Mackay.

Along with our son Harrison, our group consisted of wife/mother Kate, mother-in-law/grandmother Deborah and myself. Harry was carried in the Macpac Vamoose child carrier backpack.

Kate and I were originally arguing over who would stay at home and mind Harry while the other did the walk with Deborah (who, by the way as a grandmother, does extremely well to walk these types of tracks at any time let alone after recently returning from Everest Basecamp). We had previously taken Harry on shorter walks in the more developed sections of national parks, but not on one like this. In the end, after a good deal of planning and preparation, we decided to see how Harry would go.

We had safety gear and contingency plans. Typically though, I didn't account for the number of times Harry needed to do 'number twos' - we nearly ran out of nappies and the pack was gradually filling with baby dirt.

The track leads from the end of Dalrymple Road and includes a number of steep

rainforest ascents and descents that required some scrambling amongst trees and vines to ensure a steady foothold. There were a few creek crossings that were safely negotiated. There were many fallen trees across the track that at times required Harry to go over it and me to go under it, proving the song wrong. The summit of Dalrymple is a series of exposed boulders and affords awesome views across Mackay and the Whitsundays. The track itself is unmaintained but with the assistance of tape and official markers indicating where you are on the track, as well as the obligatory nav aids such as GPS and survey map, makes it a relatively easy path to follow (although getting lost here can, and has, led to death). The weather forecast was for a fine day and although a little cold with the wind it was otherwise perfect. While we were a little apprehensive at first about how Harry would react to being in the backpack for nearly a whole day, he proved us wrong by sleeping in the backpack for a total of two hours. When awake he goosed and gaahed and practiced his new words such as flower ('ow-a'). I noticed during the entire walk he seemed far more engaged and attentive than normal; you could tell he was interested and loved the adventure. His reaction to the walk was a kind reminder of what's important. He really couldn't care less as long as he was warm, dry, fed, close to the ones he loves and experiencing the world - the simple things. The following day Harry excitedly located his backpack on the front veranda and spent some time making a solid attempt to climb into it - we all look forward to more adventures together as a family.

**Andrew Cridland
Mackay, QLD**

Andrew Cridland, his wife Kate and son Harrison AKA 'Harry'



REMEMBERING ROD TURNER

July 20th this year marked 20 years since the death of my friend Rod Turner - and I don't want this to go unnoticed! Rod was an accomplished mountaineer and rock climber, and had featured in articles in Wild. One of his many achievements was to summit Changtse (the northern massif of Everest) with fellow Aussie Glen Nash. Rod was a complex man and had plenty of his own demons to deal with, yet could manage to put them aside and get focused on the things that he loved, his size could easily intimidate, but his heart was one of a gentle giant. He was an English teacher and having seen firsthand his extraordinary commitment to his students was something I will never forget. He was

modest and unassuming, yet he would be that person in the room that all would be sitting around as if drawn to him like a moth to a candle. His friends looked to him as a leader, yet he never thought of himself as one.

It's been hard to hold back the tears as I write this, partly because I miss Rod so much, but mostly because I am so happy to have known such an extraordinary man. A light that burns twice as bright burns half as long! Miss you Rod.

Mark Phegan
Windeyer, NSW

BUSH POETRY

I read the profile of bush poet Greg North in issue 148 with interest. Bushwalking poetry could be your next article. There are/were many bushwalking poets, for example: Rae Else-Mitchell and Jim Teys. There were many past poets, but maybe the most prolific now is Colin Gibson. He has published many bushwalking poems and also promoted many more in the book *Sing with the Wind* and soon to be published, its companion *Song of the Wild: A Hundred Bushwalker Poems*. There are a few of Colin's pieces on www.greenaissance.com.au.

His own work, *A Wild Blue Wander* is mainly out of print, but the author and myself have a few copies for those interested.

Colin Wood
Armida, NSW

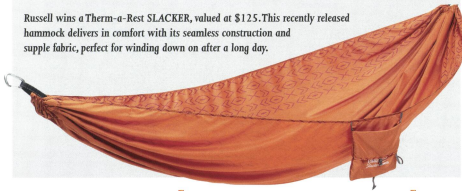
THE WINNER: BUSHWALKING TIP



Lightweight aluminium windshields are great for heating water and food more efficiently. However, when used with small billys on top of the pocket size stoves that screw onto gas cylinders, they can melt the integrated piezo ignition mechanism and the self-closing rubber seal of the cylinder! When the stovetop is unscrewed, the remaining gas just continues to leak out through the seal, which creates a potentially extremely dangerous situation.

Russell Brown
Medlow Bath, NSW

Russell wins a Therm-a-Rest SLACKER, valued at \$125. This recently released hammock delivers in comfort with its seamless construction and supple fabric, perfect for winding down on after a long day.



BUSHWALKING TIP



Pack harnesses inevitably become a bit fragrant with use. When time does not permit a proper cleaning, a dusting with talcum powder is an effective stopgap measure.

Jon How
Hobart, TAS

BUSHWALKING TIP



Re-use candles that would normally get thrown away for ultra-lightweight firefighters that work in the most extreme conditions. At every one of my kids' birthday parties, I keep the candles used on the cakes. When camping, simply press one into the ground, light it, then erect the traditional small "teepee" of twigs and leaves over the top and wait for the candle's heat to dry out and suddenly set fire to the teepee from within. Works every time. P.S. Don't get too carried away, by singing the Happy Birthday song and accidentally blowing out the candle!

Richard Pearl
Altona Meadows, VIC

Readers' letters & tips are welcome and could win you a useful piece of outdoor kit. Write to *Wild*, 11-15 Buckhurst St, South Melbourne, VIC 3025 or email wild@primecreative.com.au



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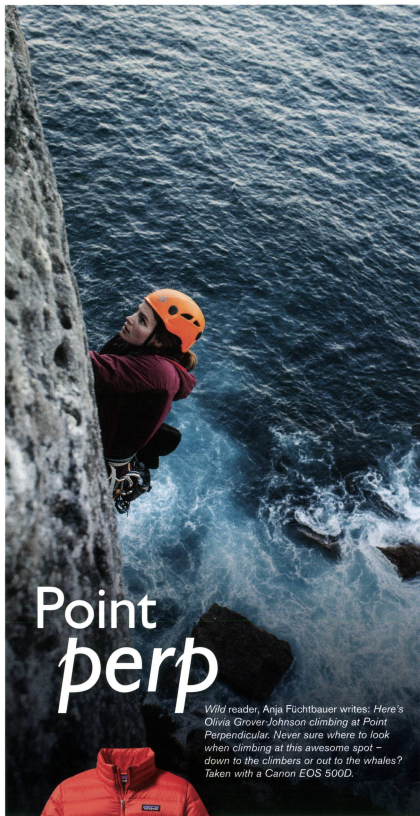
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Point perp

Wild reader, Anja Fuchtbauer writes: Here's Olivia Grover-Johnson climbing at Point Perpendicular. Never sure where to look when climbing at this awesome spot – down to the climbers or out to the whales? Taken with a Canon EOS 500D.



Anja wins a Down Sweater from Patagonia, courtesy of Paddy Pallin. This classic design features a polyester ripstop shell and is insulated with premium European goose down. Prize colour may vary from that displayed in image. Valued at \$279.

Photographer's checklist: Shooting in civilisation

- Sometimes you want to head out to capture some stunning images but don't have the time to go far. In this circumstance it's important to know your own backyard before venturing out to the wilderness. The fringes of towns and cities make for great backdrops where there is always a new place or angle to discover.
- Use Google searches to begin. Type in a place that is on the fringe of your home and click Google Images to bring up all the great, local photo locations. You will find that there are always hidden beauties just a short trip away.
- Sometimes the biggest hurdle when shooting close to towns is people, as well as the effects they have on the location. Rubbish, cars, worn tracks, pollution, noises and many other factors must be considered. However, by shooting smart – cropping images to remove unwanted "civilisation", or simply just picking up any rubbish that you find – you can easily temper the way these elements impinge on your desired shot. When it comes to night photography, you will also need to be prepared to deal with the effects of light pollution. Streetlights and other unnatural source of illumination give off a lot of light and this can ruin a night scene. In cases like these, you're best to experiment with exposure by incorporating the unnatural light within the shot. You can't beat it, so work with it.
- Always make sure you tell someone where you are going and work with another friend or two where possible, especially during night shoots.
- When shooting in urbanised landscapes, it can help to include iconic landmarks. You may find by including these special spots you can get some great exposure with local tourism and councils who may request the use of your image for promotional purposes.



Award-winning landscape photographer Cameron Blake runs weekend workshops and six-day tours on the Overland Track. His next tour departs on the 7th of January, 2016.
overlandphototours.com.au

For your chance to win a quality piece of outdoor kit, send your humorous, inspiring or spectacular shots to wild@primecreative.com.au.

To be considered for the November/December Wild Shot, submit your best photo by September 25.



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Image: © Loganbarn | Dreamstime.com

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Outdoor Ed? There's an app for that

Information that was once contained solely within the domain of books and other hardcopy formats is finding a new home in digital formats, where it can be presented and manipulated in more interactive ways. Now, even outdoor education resources are beginning to appear online and in mobile apps (read: applications), as is the case for a new project dubbed the 'Outdoor Ed APPbag of Tricks'.

Not satisfied with having published guidebooks and articles for outdoor enthusiasts and educators alike, Ro Privett envisaged mobile software that would act to compile practical information on how to conduct safe, informative adventures with young people, with a view to inspire more people to get out and experience what's on offer in the Australian wilderness.

"There are so many talented and passionate staff working in outdoor education with a vast amount of knowledge and skills," Privett said. "My desire is to capture as much of that knowledge within a simple 'at your fingertips' resource in order to spread that value throughout the education community, thereby further enhancing many more

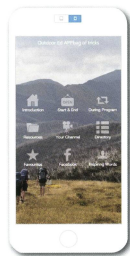
outdoor experiences."

Privett, more at home in a kayak than behind a computer, had little experience in creating such apps, but after "much research" he discovered a platform that allowed him to create the mobile application he envisaged with little proper coding required.

"The majority of the work has been taken up with collating information and research,

uploading content and learning the technical features available to us. Add to this the time it took to learn about what it takes to actually get an app like this published, then it's taken about a year of solid work to take this concept to market."

The app should have arrived on both Apple and Android app stores (Privett tells us there will be a very modest fee required for downloading it) by the time this magazine is in print, yet Wild has so far only seen a prototype version of the software. However, even at this beta stage it seems that the Outdoor Ed APPbag of Tricks will contain a variety of general teaching resources, outdoor specific content and a range of inspirational outdoor videos. Connectivity with Facebook will also provide a layer of social networking that should help this project gain further traction among its key user group. "Just like outdoor education in general, the sky is the limit for this app's potential," Privett claims. "We encourage contributions and feedback to help us continue to improve on this initial release so that the end result will be a truly refined product, useful and useable for anyone in the outdoor education industry."



Mark Soyer's star reaches new heights

Having overcome great hardships from a very young age, para-alpine skier Mark Soyer's career continues from strength-to-strength, recently securing an ambassador role with Gondwana Outdoor Clothing. After suffering from leukaemia in two separate occasions as a young child, Soyer went on to have a robust career in school-level sports and athletics. However, in 2004 a motorcycling accident saw the 26-year-old athlete sever his spinal cord, an injury that would put an end to the careers of many other sportspeople. "Even though I wasn't well as a kid, I have always been active and playing sport of some kind," Soyer said in a recent interview with Wild. "To my parents' credit, there were simply no excuses for not participating and competing as an equal."

It is this attitude that Soyer embraced in recovering from his bike accident some years later. The beginning of this process was absorbed by just figuring out how to get along with his injuries. Soyer eventually came to embrace para-skiing, having been an avid skier in the years prior to the crash.

"I don't think you can be prepared for such an event, but I did lean heavily on the lessons I'd learnt at a younger age – I may have even convinced myself I could go back to living the life I'd had before the accident," he recalled.

"I'm not complaining, but I was very wrong about that.

"There were many challenges to get to the stage where I am now – but it all disappears when I have a chance climb into my ski and send it off down a hill."

Since discovering the sit-ski and mastering the art of mono-skiing shortly after his accident,

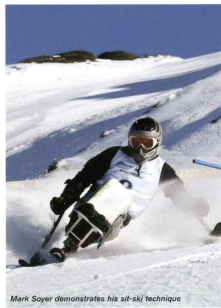
Soyer has gone on to hike and ski the Highlands Bowl in Aspen, compete in various events at the 2011 New Zealand Winter Games and race at the 2015 IPC Alpine Skiing World Championships in Panorama, Canada. He's also been awarded the Steven J. Ricci Award at Winter Park for exemplary team leadership and sportsmanship.

Working as a jeweller and gemmologist when he isn't on the slopes, Soyer finds many parallels between his two main pursuits. "Working as a jeweller requires an amount of perfection that I can also apply to my skiing, as I am not yet the skier I some day hope to become."

As a result, Soyer now has his sights set of the next world championships, which are to be held in Italy on the 17th of March, 2017 and he's unsure if that will mark the end of his professional skiing career.

Regardless of what the future holds, Soyer's love of skiing is maintains its fervour with each new winter season and he plans to continue being involved with the sport and encouraging others to get involved long after he retires as a professional.

"I also have a few adventurous ambitions I'd dearly love to tick off," he told us. "One is to explore Patagonia, while the other is to paddle the Katherine Gorge."



Mark Soyer demonstrates his sit-ski technique

Research supports for mainland devils pilot



Over the past year a number of stories have focused on certain corners of Australia's conservation movement are keen to bring Tasmanian devils back to the mainland, despite a 3,000-year absence.

Now, researchers from the University of New South Wales have completed an impact assessment that finds reintroducing the species to the forests of southeastern NSW would help curb the spread of foxes and cats.

While this has been discussed as a potential theory for helping support the survival and reintroduction of other native species, this is the first thorough ecological assessment to support the hypothesis.

Co-author of the study, Professor Mike Letnic told The Guardian that a trial reintroduction of Tasmanian devils should be attempted.

"We should try a release in a controlled fenced area to start with," he said. "But we need to do something bold. We keep hearing about the devastating impact of cats and foxes and we're not succeeding in ameliorating those impacts."

"Tasmania is a great case study. Foxes haven't established there despite several attempts, and cats aren't rampant either – and that's because of the devil. The devil is suppressing their numbers."

Letnic sees the Great Dividing Range as a suitable location for any pilot reintroduction due to its lack of dingoes and large fox population.

It is believed that Tasmanian devils first disappeared from the mainland as a result of increased competition from dingoes, since then humans have removed dingoes from most of Victoria and NSW, allowing cats and foxes to become the dominant predators.

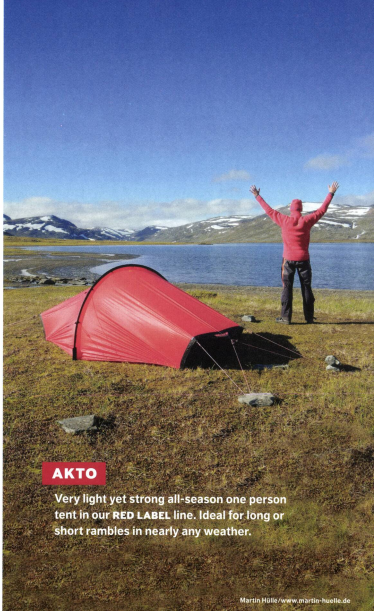
Earlier this year, dingo expert Dr Thomas Newsome argued that a similar pilot should be run to reintroduce dingoes into certain protected areas in NSW, after having spent years studying the positive effect the reintroduction of wolves had on American ecosystems.

"While their physiology and environment are clearly different, the wolf and the dingo occupy very similar ecological niches and therefore play a very similar role in their respective habitats as apex predators," he said.

If it is the case that devils are as capable as dingoes in terms of suppressing feral predator numbers, the public are likely to support them as an alternative due to the mixed opinions people have regarding dingoes, on top of the fact that dingoes often interbreed with feral dogs.

The discussion regarding how best to protect and even 'rewild' Australia's National Parks continues unabated.

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A different sort of holiday by John Griffiths



Originally designed to prove the mettle of mid-19th Century sailors, Outward Bound Australia's premium Summit to Sea program has since been tailored to suit today's environment while still providing challenging experiences.

I didn't undertake Summit to Sea out of any desire for a physical challenge; I craved a task that would ensure I was tested in every way possible. Now I fully understand the saying, 'be careful what you wish for'. Starting in the Australian Capital Territory, the course covers some of Australia's most mountainous terrain, eventually concluding on Victoria's southern coastline. As such,

there's a large amount of hiking accompanied by some rafting, caving and bike riding legs. There were other activities as well, but you won't find out what they are until you've completed the main course (sorry). In total, our group travelled nearly 360 kilometres over a 26-day timeframe. A solid effort, but the real challenge was presented by the conditions. The ever-changing environment added further layers of difficulty that really tested our mental and emotional toughness.

As a result of these various pressures, our group was stress-tested from beginning to end – had it not been for our ability to form

an effective team, we may not have completed the first week of trials. The friendships we formed as a result of undertaking this course will no doubt last for years, and we all have Outward Bound to thank for that.

Course coordinator Nick, along with instructors Cassia, Alex and Mark all ensured we drew the most amount of benefit from each of the experiences we had. Their tireless efforts continued to instil confidence in us throughout the course and that's something I never thought an experience like this would provide. I now feel like a stronger person in every way and that has a lot to do with the support they gave.

The greatest lesson learnt was that life really is about the journey and not the destination. Along the way, we saw some of the most mesmerising views that were made even more stunning when considering the effort it took to find them.

The completion of this course has given me the greatest sense of achievement in my life so far. It isn't just the physical toughness that I am able to draw on, but the values and the beliefs that have all come out of this program has given me a more optimistic outlook on life.

Outward Bound's motto is 'To Serve, To Strive and Not To Yield' and this is something I now take with me in everything I do. If only everyone could be encouraged to undertake such an extraordinary holiday.



www.outwardbound.org.au

SCROGGIN

World Rogaining Champs heads to Finland

By the time this is published, the World Rogaining Championships will have taken place in the Saariselkä region of Finland, some 200 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle. It is the first time that the WRC will be held within the Arctic Circle. Set within Urho Kekkonen National Park, competitors will run through open tundra with fells and difficult wetlands. Dozens of teams from all over the world have already registered (at the time of writing) to enter the competition, including several teams from Australia. It is believed that rogain was first undertaken by members of the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club in the 1940s. This year's WRC takes place on the 22nd and 23rd of August.

Bibbulmun Track restoration underway

The famous Bibbulmun Track suffered from severe fire damage earlier this year, but work is underway to restore it to good condition. The track can already be walked end-to-end, however this will only last while the Murray River water levels remain low enough to cross.



A new location for the Shannon River Bridge has also been confirmed and installation is planned for the coming spring. Replacement shelters and campsites are also expected to begin construction at a similar time. Many of these works have been made possible as a result of the generous donations received by the Bibbulmun Track Foundation. For more information visit: www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au.

Carmichael mine beset by setbacks

Plans for a \$16.5 billion coalmine development in Queensland's Galilee Basin have been stalled

following a federal court decision in August. In what the government is calling an error of administrative paperwork, it appears that environment minister Greg Hunt did not heed advice submitted to his office regarding the presence of two threatened reptiles in the region. The delay of what has been dubbed the Carmichael mine is the latest in a series of headaches for Indian mining giant Adani, which has been forced to cut back its workforce as a result of investor scepticism. Should the development go ahead, it would be the largest such project in Australian history.

The Daintree Challenge by Carolyn Little



Carolyn Little, science educator and first-time author

The day is overcast, and the tops of the range are shrouded in cloud. The track into the forest is muddy after early rain. Beneath the canopy of taller trees are stands of majestic fan palms and vines of the vicious wait-a-while palm snaking up and around tree trunks to reach the light. As you progress, birdcalls die away and there are a few urgent rustlings in the undergrowth. If you hope to spot a cassowary, there is no sign yet. The trees close overhead and the filtered sunlight does little to illuminate the forest floor. You can hear the splash and gurgle of the creek as the track draws parallel with the watercourse. Rare and primitive plants such as *Gymnostoma australe* and *Noahdenndron nicholasii* can be found here. You are in the oldest rainforest on Earth, the majestic Daintree, the largest unbroken stretch of rainforest in Australia, and part of the Queensland Wet Tropics World Heritage Site. Australia was once covered in such rainforest.

We use superlatives to describe the Daintree. The oldest ..., largest ..., richest in biodiversity. A place of great beauty and energy, the teeming life here abounds and flourishes.

Prior to the World Heritage citation in 1988, the lower Daintree in particular was opened up to private usage, but there is now a concerted 'buy-back' program aimed at restoring and consolidating the natural environment. Many private residents also take a responsible attitude, and encourage growth and regrowth on their properties.

The forest faces a number of challenges. Some development still takes place. Not only is there loss of forest itself, the margins are subjected to weed infestation, while pathogens such as myrtle rust, and feral animals take their toll. Fragmentation of the forest area limits the ability of animals to move freely, which ultimately can reduce the survival of some species. Money is needed for both buy-back and remediation, and unfortunately there seems to be little government will for this to happen. Tourism is a multi-million dollar industry. It requires the establishment and maintenance of roads, transport, accommodation and other tourist facilities. This places demands on the amenity of the area, and the challenge is to balance the competition between the needs of the industry and the preservation and health of the World Heritage site. Climate change will inevitably have an effect. Clouds on the peaks of the granite ranges will rise as temperatures climb. This will impact on forest boundaries and on the viability of some organisms. Climate change is, of course, a natural phenomenon, and over the millennia of its existence, the Daintree has withstood the cyclical changes. However, as the rate of climate change is perceived to be on the rise, its capacity to cope will be tested.

The incredible diversity of plant life is a source of hundreds of thousands of chemical compounds, many of them alkaloids, which a plant may produce as part of its defence mechanism. This has proved attractive to pharmaceutical companies who, prior to the ground-breaking legislation introduced by the Queensland Government in 2004, were freely able to collect samples of plant material for analysis. The legislation follows UN guidelines for such activity, and limits and attempts to control biopiracy. Companies must now apply for a permit to exploit the rainforest bounty. Fortunately, the impact of biodiversity is minimal, as only small samples of plant material are required.

Cyclones have a devastating effect as they tear through the forest, cutting great swathes as they pass across the coastline and into the interior. The rainforest has proven resilient to this seasonal threat, and within a very short time, natural regrowth and repair of staggering proportions is underway. It is likely that future weather events will be more extreme, and resilience may be challenged.

In reality, resilience is a marked characteristic of the Daintree. Left to itself, it will respond and adapt to external stress as it always has. The real challenge is to commit to a full understanding of the ongoing impact of human intervention, and to deal with it. It is my opinion, therefore, that organisations such as Rainforest Rescue deserve our support.

Wild Diary

Orienteering WA's Bush Series, WA, September 6

To be held in Spice Brook, WA, this standard bush orienteering event will be hosted by the Wullundigong Orienteers of the West. wa.orienteeing.asn.au

Winter Challenge Adventure Festival, VIC, September 11-13

A weekend of adventure sports including bushwalking, cycling and paddling events held in the Northern Grampians. winterchallenge.com.au

Surfcoast Century, VIC, September 19

100km or 50km trail running event along Victoria's surf coast and wildflower hinterland. Can be completed solo or in relay teams. rapidascent.com.au/surfcoastcentury

Lea Extreme Race, TAS, September 26

This year the renowned kayak race will be hosted by the Tasmanian Canoe Club. Held on the Lea River, this event is regarded as the most extreme paddling event in Australia. tcc.canoe.org.au

Freyinet Challenge, TAS, October 10-11

A multisport challenge in Tasmania's rugged east coast. Experience the beauty of The Hazards and Wineglass Bay in a competitive setting. freyinetchallenge.com.au

Buckley's Chance 25km, NSW, October 24

The third event in the Buckley's Chance series for 2015 will see competitors negotiating an off-track course in sub-tropic jungle around Mt Warning. survivalrun.com.au

The restoration culture of Norfolk Island

by James Dryburgh

The Pacific paradise of Norfolk Island.
Photos: James Dryburgh



A landscape devastated by logging, introduced species or pollution is a stark reminder of how destructive humanity can be, but that same power can also be used to reverse the damage. Wild Mob is an example of such a positive force. The non-profit collaborates with locals on creative and direct conservation projects, bringing volunteers into some of Australia's most beautiful and unique habitats to help restore them in a variety of ways. Volunteers for Wild Mob have diverse backgrounds and reasons for joining, and Wild recently accompanied a number of these to the remote Norfolk Island. The group included remote graduates seeking practical experience, semi-retired scientists, a mineworker from Western Australia, a retired horticulturalist from Sydney and a teacher from Queensland. They all had two things in common: they wanted to do something interesting and useful, and to visit

Norfolk Island "as travellers, not tourists". The group was soon treated to a unique experience seldom glimpsed by casual visitors. While they were all nominally present to work on conservation projects, the volunteers ate and conversed with the local inhabitants, including three generations of the Christian family (descendants of Bounty mutineer, Fletcher Christian). The Christians occupy property above the picturesque Ansons Bay, and it was here that the volunteer group spent some time restoring native forest by removing weeds and trapping rats. The family themselves have taken an active role in restoring corridors of remnant forest and attracting rare bird species such as masked boobies back to the cliff tops to nest. On another corner of the island, the group was met by Molly and Duncan Sanderson who facilitated restoration work in a forest valley

overlooking Cemetery Bay. Both in their early 70s, the Sandersons work for hours each day to remove invasive weeds before replacing them with native species. They undertake the work because they recognise how special these places truly are; deep in this valley live some of the rarest plants in the world: *Clematis dubia*, of which only 30 examples are thought to remain. And the Sandersons are justifiably pleased to have the added assistance in their labours. "The volunteers are just amazing people," Duncan said. "I mean, they spend a day helping us and then, at the end of it all, they come up and thank me."

In the end, the values held by the residents of Norfolk Island and the volunteers from Wild Mob aren't that far removed. The islanders speak strongly of their belief that they act as caretakers of the land more so than owners. Wild Mob chief executive, Dr Derek Ball said this is mirrored in the conservation group's 'Four Cs' ethos.

"We are all about Conservation," he said. "But effective conservation efforts are only ever sustained where we have truly and honestly engaged with our host Community and have their support. We work hard to understand, and always respect the Culture of the communities we work with. And finally, we don't ignore Commercial realities."

Yet more important than any sentiment, the activities of locals and groups such as Wild Mob do appear to be having a positive effect on the ecology of Norfolk Island. A few years ago, the endemic green parrot was on the edge of extinction. It is now becoming a symbol of conservation success on Norfolk. It is a symbol of a bigger picture of collaborative conservation work benefiting the island's 57 other threatened species and building a restoration culture that sits comfortably with the islanders' long-standing traditions of land stewardship.



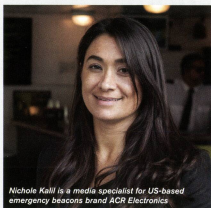
wildmob.org



Wild Mobbers on Norfolk

60
Seconds
with

Nichole Kalil on emergency beacons and Apollo 11



Nichole Kalil is a media specialist for US-based emergency beacons brand ACR Electronics

What is ACR, how long has it been in operation and how has it evolved over the years?

ACR Electronics is survival technology gear company that has been active since the 1950s. In fact, ACR is the maker of the penlight that Apollo 11 crew used to keep the shuttle lit after having some power failures. ACR, in partnership with General Electric, also developed the camera that was the first to take pictures of earth from outer space.

Emergency beacons are a significant part of the ACR business, but there's more than that - can you tell us about some of your other offerings? Building on the mention of the penlight used on Apollo 11, emergency lights are also a significant part of our business. ACR offers boat searchlights, rescue lights and distress lights.

Why is it so important that remote wilderness adventurers carry an emergency beacon?

Because you never know! A beacon used in a situation of imminent danger not only guarantees the closest Rescue Coordination Centre will be notified that there is someone in distress, it also creates a quicker, safer scenario for the rescuing agency personnel.

At what stage would you recommend I consider one? How far away from civilisation do I need to do be?

If you already own a beacon, why not bring it with you in any outdoor adventure scenario? It certainly could not hurt.

If you are wondering whether you should make the investment in a beacon, ask yourself if after all the preparation you have made for your adventure that having a little device would add that one piece of assurance to any 'what ifs' you may have in mind.

What type of beacons can be registered and why should I consider doing so? Do most people register their beacon?

All 406 MHz beacons (PLBs, EPIRBs and ELTs) are required by law to be registered. According to the authority in search and rescue, Cospas-Sarsat: "Registering your beacon may make the difference between life and death. By registering your beacon you allow search-and-rescue authorities in an emergency to retrieve crucial information about you, your aircraft or vessel, and people who can provide valuable information about you (your emergency contacts)".

Registration is easy and free. You can use this link: www.beacons.amsa.gov.au or call 1800 406 406.

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Great Koala National Park: Securing Australia's icon

by Dr Oisín Sweeney

The Great Koala National Park (GKNP) was born of serious concern for Australia's most iconic species. Once abundant, koalas have declined sharply—to the point that, in 2012, the koala populations of NSW, Queensland

and ACT were listed as vulnerable under commonwealth legislation. In NSW, koala numbers have fallen 30 per cent in just 20 years. On that trend, koalas will be extinct in NSW by 2055 if nothing is done.

Causes of the decline are varied. Drought has had a serious impact with koala populations in the Pilliga Forest crashing from tens of thousands to just hundreds. On the coast, koalas compete with humans; the more fertile soils on the coastal flats provide good koala habitat, but most humans live there too. Unfortunately, our planning system has been unable to marry the needs of koalas and development. The Pacific Highway is a huge barrier to east-west koala movement and fragments populations. Logging is a major threat. While Koalas don't require old-growth trees or hollows, they do require food trees, shelter trees and well-connected habitat. Logging fragments and destroys habitat and stimulates dieback, further damaging forest health.

A Local Movement Grows

Concern about koalas led to several groups developing the GKNP proposal: the Coffs Harbour Branch of the National Parks Association of NSW (NPA); the Bellingen Environment Centre; North Coast Environment Centre; Clarence Environment Association and the North East Forest Alliance.

It was felt that the koala is so special a symbol of Australia that it deserved a dedicated reserve—similar to the approach that taken by China to protect the giant panda. The proposal was included in the Our Environment, Our Future document, which was a list of key asks from NSW environment groups prior to the 2015 election. Opposition leader Luke Foley enthusiastically adopted the proposal, but the Coalition government are not yet supportive.

About the GKNP

The GKNP proposal would combine 140,000 hectares of existing reserves with 175,000 hectares of State Forest. It stretches from the Chelundi area, northwest of Coffs Harbour, south to just inland of South West Rocks (see map). This location was identified by ecologist David Scotts as home to two koala metapopulations (a group of smaller populations that periodically exchange individuals) which together contained up to 4500 koalas, or 20 per cent of the NSW population. This area is likely to become even more important as climate change pushes koalas eastwards¹. In essence, the GKNP is



www.hemamaps.com

designed to encompass the maximum number of koalas in the smallest area. The NPA recognises concerns over possible job losses in the logging industry. But we believe that the tourism return from the GKNP, as well as direct employment to manage the park and rehabilitate logged areas, will more than offset any jobs lost. In order to maximise the tourism potential of the GKNP the NPA, along with the Bellingen Environment Centre, commissioned drawings of a visitor centre to be located on the Pacific Highway, south of Coffs Harbour and adjacent to Bongil Bongil National Park. The centre would also house a koala hospital which would care for animals infected with chlamydia and those injured by dog attacks or vehicle strikes.

Benefits to Other Species and Ecosystems

The Coffs Harbour hinterland possesses an extraordinary diversity of eucalypt tree

species and forest ecosystems. In 2012 the NPA undertook an assessment of the World Heritage values of the forests of north-east NSW¹, which recommended including these values in the existing Gondwana Rainforest World Heritage forests (obviously a small name change would also have to occur). The GKNP would thus protect areas of eucalypt forest of global significance.

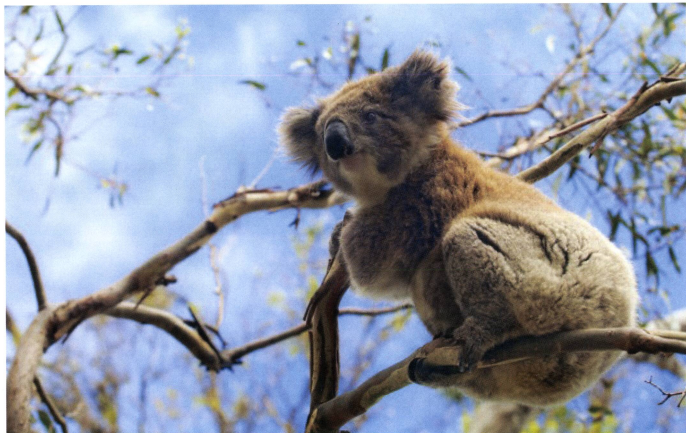
Besides eucalypts, there is a wealth of threatened plants and animals within the GKNP proposal area. Some of the better known are the long-nosed potoroo; brush-tailed rock-wallaby and spotted-tail quoll. In addition, and this is where similarities with the Great Forest National Park exist, forest species that depend on habitat features such as old-growth forest and tree hollows would benefit. Research shows that logging reduces hollow density and large trees in forests²⁻⁴ and, although it will take time, removing logging is the first step on the road to

recovery. Species such as the yellow-bellied glider, greater glider and large forest owls like the sooty, masked and powerful owl would all derive long-term benefit from the GKNP.

What Are We Doing and What Can You Do to Help?

We will be working to persuade both local and state governments that reserves, especially the GKNP, are the best tools we have for securing the future of koalas. But we need to keep the pressure up on our MPs. As our patron, Tim Faulkner said "it is public pressure that will make the GKNP happen". So please visit our website koalapark.org.au to pledge your support and help promote our campaign. The NPA will post regular updates on Facebook and Twitter, so make contact to keep up to date.

Dr Oisín Sweeney is a science officer for the National Parks Association of New South Wales.



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Eastern barred bandicoot *Perameles gunnii*



Once common throughout Victoria's volcanic plains and grasslands, the eastern barred bandicoot (EBB for short) is now one of our most endangered species and is currently considered 'extinct in the wild'

The utilisation and consequent destruction of more than 99 per cent of its native grassland habitat has wreaked havoc on bandicoot populations, while further pressures such as predation from foxes, cats and dogs, as well as competition with rabbits has compounded the problem. As a result, the survival of these shy, tussock-dwelling marsupials now depends on captive breeding programs and securing suitably healthy, predator-free habitats.

Although bandicoots are considered extinct in the wild in Victoria, the increasing success of breeding programs in zoos and wildlife sanctuaries means there is a need for a larger, predator-proof habitat that bandicoots can breed and flourish in. In 2013, the eastern barred bandicoot recovery project released 47 of these critically endangered bandicoots into the newly protected and restored habitat of Woodlands Historic Park in Greenvale, Victoria. These bandicoots were selected from a variety of wildlife parks throughout Victoria to ensure genetic diversity and prior to their release they underwent a specific rehabilitation program to ensure their ability to survive outdoors.

Richard Hill, senior biodiversity officer with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning is also chair of the eastern barred bandicoot recovery team. Other members of this team include Parks Victoria, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Mount Rothwell Conservation Centre, Zoos Victoria and the National Trust. Working together at Woodlands Historic Park, these organisations have secured areas where bandicoots can flourish, while also setting up important monitoring programs in other locations, such as Hamilton, Victoria.

According to Hill, eastern barred bandicoots have "an amazing natural history."

"They are one of the fastest breeding mammals on earth, capable of having up to five litters of up to five young (but usually two or three) every year of their short lives. Despite this, they are one of Victoria's rarest mammals."

Even once a suitable habitat has been found, the bandicoots will remain extremely vulnerable to foxes, so a large amount of the

work performed at Woodlands is committed to keeping these ferals out.

"It's the third feral-predator free site we have established for the eastern barred bandicoot and we hope it will support a population of up to 500 within another couple of years," Hill says.

"We have set a target of 2,500 individuals to secure the conservation of this species."

Enclosing the eastern barred bandicoots' habitat is an all-important predator-proof fence that is tall to prevent cats and foxes climbing over. Volunteers carry out ongoing border patrols and fence maintenance around the seven-kilometre perimeter to prevent breaches resulting from animals digging under it or branches falling onto it.

Since the initial release in 2013, the bandicoot population at Woodlands appears to be thriving. The recovery team commit to twice-yearly trapping sessions in order to gain some understanding of the population size and health.

According to CVA's eastern barred bandicoot project officer Travis Scicchitano, the result of these surveys shows that the Woodlands project is working, with each new trapping session indicating an ever-flourishing population of bandicoots present.

"This July, we caught a total of 114 eastern barred bandicoots, with 46 of these being new animals we'd not trapped before. Even better, 94 per cent of the females we found showed signs of recent breeding activities."



www.conservationvolunteers.com.au



Madeline Townsend

Madeline Townsend is the director of volunteer and membership services for Conservation Volunteers Australia – an organisation that connects volunteers with critical conservation and wildlife projects.

Curious about a plant or animal you've spotted?

Send a photo to wild@primecreative.com.au and we'll find out about it for you.



Bob Brown's green living

Home of the swift parrot and steeped in Tasmanian charm and history, Bruny Island is now set to bear Hunt's brunt, writes Bob Brown

Bruny is an hourglass-shaped island south of Hobart that has become famous for its relaxed lifestyle, rugged coastal scenery, golden beaches, bushwalking, wine, cheese, truffles and fudge. It is reached by a 20-minute ferry ride across the D'Entrecasteaux Channel at Kettering. On its seaward side is magnificent Adventure Bay where Captains Cook, Bligh (he planted Tasmania's first apple tree) and D'Entrecasteaux all anchored in the eighteenth century.

Bruny's peaceful Lyluequonny people had no concept of the onslaught coming their way in the nineteenth. One incident began with young Truganini and her husband accepting a lift across to Bruny with sealers who pitched the man out halfway across and, when he tried to clamour back into the boat, cut off his hands.

But that's black-armed history so let me fast forward to 2015. Tasmania's Hodgman government, backed all the way by the nation's environment minister Greg Hunt, is logging this most vital last stronghold of one of the world's most endangered bird species, the swift parrot: we call them 'swifties'.

Whereas the Bass Strait ferry takes all night to cross from the continent to Tasmania these fastest parrots on Earth cross in three hours. Once found in large over-wintering flocks from Sydney to Adelaide, swift parrots are suddenly down to fewer than 1,000 breeding pairs. At current rates they will be extinct before Prince George gets to his twenty-first birthday. Besides climate change, loss of mainland woodlands, feral cats and urban sprawl, a new 'horror' factor has come into

focus: cameras show that the beautiful sugar gliders introduced to Tasmania a century or two ago not only invade nests for swifties' eggs, but they eat breeding females in their nests on mainland Tasmania's southeast coastline, including around our home near Cygnet.

Apparently the swifties worked out long, long ago that they could safely forage and perch in the continental glider-gilded woodlands through winter and then fly to glider-free Tasmania to nest in old growth trees in summer. Now, it appears, the only safe nesting places left are on Maria and Bruny Island. And Bruny has much more forest.

But our Tasmanian and federal environment ministers have done what the gliders can't do: they have authorised industrial clearfelling logging to extend the carnage to Bruny. I was there last week and the destruction in the freshly logged forest coupe we visited is complete; there isn't a tree left standing. No trees, no nests, no swift parrots.

This is a travesty of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. Yet it is the policy of the Coalition and Labor to log many more coupes on Bruny for woodchips and sawlog and to feed 'peelee' logs to Malaysian marauder Ta Ann's vener mill at Judbury, where there are also plans for a Greg Hunt-preferred forest furnace. The log trucks make the ferry crossing check-by-jowl with tourist cars and buses.

You can see my clip of the logging carnage on Bruny Island at www.bobbrown.org.au. You are also welcome to join our campaign to save Bruny, its forests and its swifties.



The coupe on Bruny Island. Photo: Bob Brown



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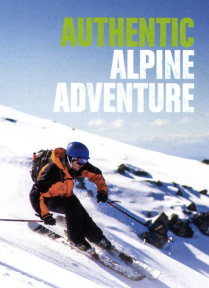
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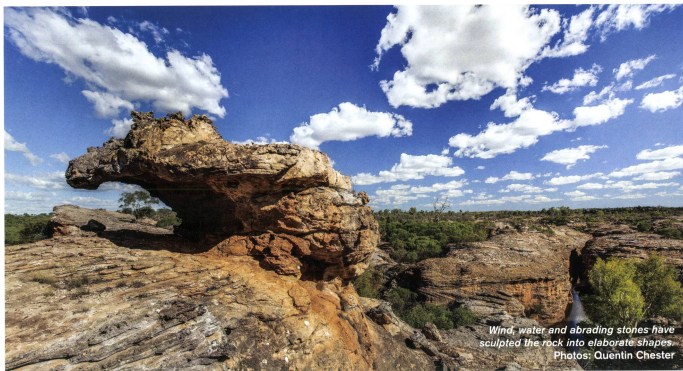
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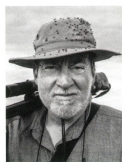
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Wind, water and abrading stones have sculpted the rock into elaborate shapes.
Photos: Quentin Chester



Savannah Flâneur

Quentin Chester ditches the tinny in order to explore Cobbold Gorge in the only appropriate fashion: on foot

Cobbold Gorge is nowhere near a beaten track. It's tucked deep in sandstone country roughly halfway between Townsville and Normanton in far north Queensland. We're talking the big, dusty Gulf Savannah. In other words, straggly scrub, mobs of cattle and lots of red dirt. Not to mention termite mounds the size of rugby forwards.

Even by the twisted logic of gorges this place is odd. For most of its life Cobbold Creek ran down a rocky gully to join Robertson River. But then, a few thousand years ago, it decided to veer off down a narrow slot of a gorge. No one really knows why, though this stretch of the Robertson does lie along a twitchy geological fault. So it's on the cards that a bit of uplift might have raised the final stage of Cobbold's old watercourse. And this could have been just enough to force the creek to suddenly hang a left turn.

Whatever the backstory, the result is a cracker of a chasm slicing into the sandstone. Being youngish, geologically speaking, it hasn't had time to open up. In places it's not much more than a couple of metres wide. Even so, you can tell it cops a battering when there's a big wet season. The walls low down

are scalloped smooth from the tumbling effect of gravel and rocks that hurtle down here in a flood.

Unreliability is the one constant of these summer rains. When photographer Drew Hopper and I bowled up to visit the gorge in early autumn water levels were relatively low. Good news for us, and it meant Gaye and Simon Terry - who look after this corner of the family's Robin Hood Station - could run Drew and me up the gorge in one of their boats. At first glance you wonder what all the fuss is about. Cobbold Creek joins Robertson River in a silty run of pools and overhanging paperbarks. But 100 metres or so upstream the gorge walls rise up, the trees are gone and you're in the groove.

Being a gorge tragic, this was right up my alley. Steep stone, a band of blue sky overhead and who knows what around the next bend. Cobbold is a continuous pool of amber brown. Apart from the occasional blade of rock poking from the surface like a dorsal fin, there's no place to land, nor any sandy banks or other respite. Close to water level the stone is algal-black and gazing down the guts of the gorge the dark sculptural folds look a touch menacing in

that inside-belly-of-the-beast kind of way.

So there we were, the four of us in a flat-bottomed tinny, heading upstream as Simon steered the little electric outboard trolling motor that powered our silent ride. It was atmospheric stuff, and very generous of our hosts to let Drew and I gatecrash their off-season, a time when the place is normally closed to rubbernecks like us. However, as Drew sat up the bow snapping madly with his SLR, I couldn't help feeling bothered. This was a gem of a place, the kind of outback hideaway Australian's love to rummage into. But, as good as it was, the encounter was slightly off-kilter for me. I suspect it was partly to do with being in a boat and just sitting there as a passive bystander. More to the point: I wasn't walking.

A gorge favours a certain approach. You have to give in to the place and be taken along by the twists and turns. At the same time, it's not all about surrender. These places urge you to be physically engaged and open to distraction. There's a mode of being active in a gorge that echoes its wayward spirit. For me it's about rattling around in the space, absorbing the detail of trees and rockholes, even looking along side gullies and behind

buttresses. I walk in fits and spurts. It's strolling that's both erratic and alert. You're energised but without high purpose.

The French have a word for this habit. As a literary gadabout on the streets of mid-nineteenth century Paris you were a *flâneur*. It was poet Charles Baudelaire who did the most to elaborate on the idea: 'For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world . . .'

Though this is all about relating to city life, the freedom of mobility is the key. And the description also works for a style of walking out bush where a single destination is not top of the list. Like a loop walk in a forest, or padding your way along a rocky gorge. It's about observation on the fly, being immersed in a space yet also attuned and self-possessed. As much as anyone rabbit on about being "at one with nature", we are mostly in two minds. Creatures of whim, our time is restless with ideas, randomness and what's around the next corner. Walking gives us an excuse to idly snack on our discoveries. Writing about strolling New York City, Alfred Kazin characterised this state of being as 'a happy, yet mostly vague and excited feeling.'

The thing is, you don't get it sitting still. Nor even being plonked on a bus or in a boat. Floating up somewhere like Katherine Gorge aboard a cruise boat - with a drone of commentary - leaves me cold. Likewise, standing on the rim of the Grand Canyon and gazing into the abyss, the place feels impossibly distant and withheld.

Which is perhaps why on day two in Cobbold country, Drew and I politely declined the kind offer to take ourselves back upstream in the tinny. Instead, head-torches on, we headed out before dawn to walk. Simon had given us some instructions about how to get to the plateau above the gorge. But stumbling around in the dark we took a wrong turn and found ourselves hemmed in by steep bluffs of rock beside the gorge entrance. So we retreated and skirted along the gravel slopes until we could scramble up a shallow fissure to get on top.

The plateau was anything but flat. Instead it sprawled out into a maze of alleys and outcrops. There was no one line to follow, no obvious path. So we scuttled up and down laneways crowded with spinifex and skinny acacias. After a few dead ends we worked our way back northwards to the edge of deep rift - the canyon-like gash of Cobbold Gorge. Drew and his tripod took up a position to photograph the main channel. Meanwhile,

I set off upstream, contouring around aprons of rock.

In this time alone I wandered among rocky knolls, weathered into gritty mushroom shapes. There were overhangs and little sandy courtyards tucked away among the backstreets. I was drawn to the pebbly rock textures and the webs of orb spinners strung between the trees. Closer to the creek, moist fissures sprouted ferns and vines. Every now and then a pair of parrots shot past and I too kept moving, glad to be footloose in my own metropolis.

I felt released, busy with the granular details of navigating my way, jumping gaps and scrambling to new crests and turrets. As well as such bursts of progress, there came fitful pauses when all manner of associations stopped me in my tracks. At times the place resembled walks deep in the stone pagoda terrain of the northern Blue Mountains, or among the weathered pillars and arches of Mount Moffat above Carnarvon Gorge. Elsewhere I was lost in memories of the deep-etched plateau lands of the Kimberley and Kakadu. Those days adrift in the creamy tropical air laced with the aroma of spinifex resin.

This scatty idling is its own reward. As I see it we spend enough of our time on well-

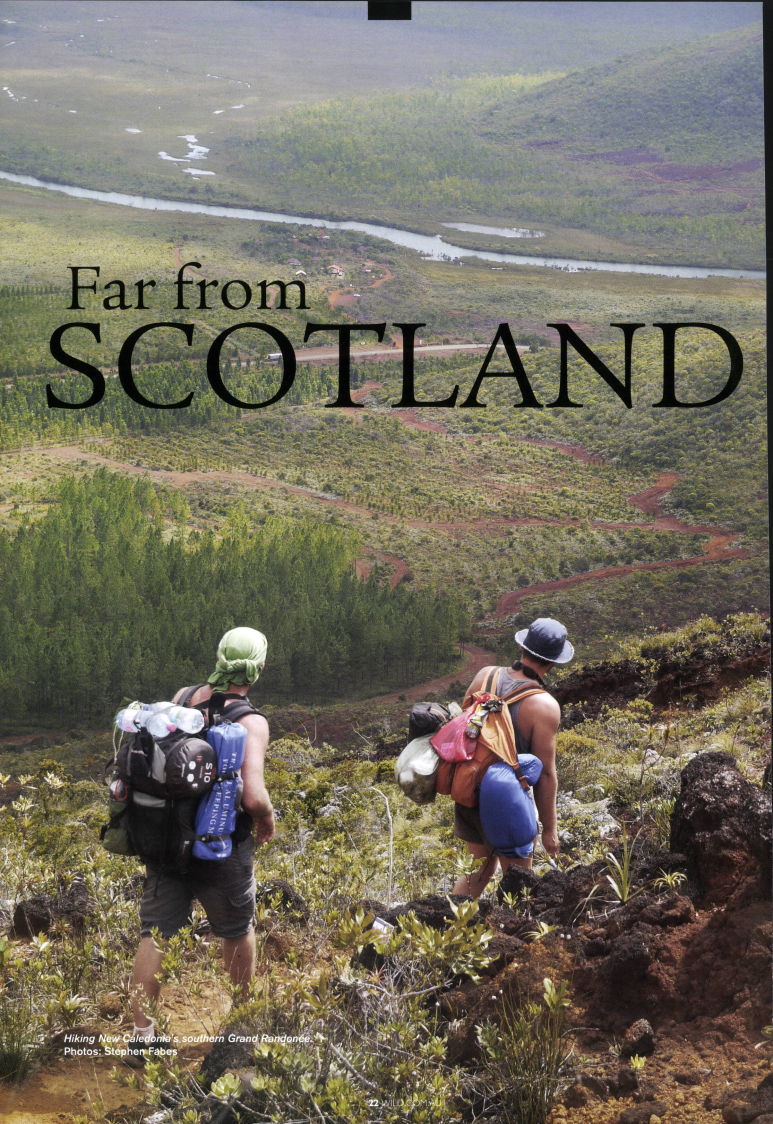
made tracks, doing the dutiful thing. There's more to life than marching along single file at a nice even tempo. As creatures we need to break it up. Take a risk or two. Feel those spikes of intensity. A lively dose of aimless walking can do it. And it probably doesn't matter whether you're in Paris, downtown Wollongong or somewhere in the Gulf Savannah.

After an hour or so I edged back towards the gorge. Sunlight was breaking across the outcrops. There was a moment there at the rim, teetering on little blades of Jurassic sandstone when the light bounced off the walls onto the gorge pool stretched out below. The shadows of the day before were gone and the water was glassy smooth, a mirror to the sky above. I tried taking a few photos but even they don't quite catch the mood. Standing there, I was in the space with the sun on the rocks, yet at the same time sailing above it all. The world was my own. On paper this sounds hopelessly indulgent and self-dramatising. There's only one thing I can say: I guess you had to be there. *W*

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quentinchester.com



A photo can't accurately capture the mood of a place like this



Far from SCOTLAND

Hiking New Caledonia's southern Grand Randonné.
Photos: Stephen Fabes

Choosing to visit New Caledonia on a whim, *Stephen Fabes* comes close to biting off more than he can chew while many fellow visitors laze on the beach

The wind-bowed palm trees disappeared in an explosion of foam as another vast Pacific breaker pitched onto the shore. Beyond the trees, a sullen murk lingered over the lumpy sea and rain fell in swathes. Apart from a few skittish dogs that scampered just beyond the sea's reach, the coastline was lifeless.

Any more hiking was beginning to seem unlikely: the storm was now vicious enough to put the islands of New Caledonia on Orange Alert and to earn the inappropriately tepid name, 'June'. The online weather tracker showed the extent of the tantrum June was having over the Pacific - she was now an intense red, curled like a spiral galaxy, and hundreds of miles across the sea. Then the computer screen turned black; the power had gone out.

The adventure had begun with a most dangerous pairing: an idle hour and Google Maps. The long, thin, oblique island was a mystery, a lone speech mark possessed by nothing but speechless ocean.

New Caledonia is an archipelago and a French collectivity that lies around 1200 kilometres from Australian shores, about halfway to Fiji. 'The third largest island in the Pacific,' said my guidebook, highlighting my ignorance. I'd come to the islands on a whim, with a half-baked plan of doing some hiking, all because the Wikipedia entry had some nice photos and didn't mention Ebola. But hiking is not how the mainstream while away the hours on Pacific islands. On the flight, booted and trail-ready, I was nestled incongruously between honeymooners in sarongs. Everyone but me looked to be on a countdown to contented comas on white sand. "Was this trip a mistake?" I thought. Then whispers from those in window seats swept through the fuselage. The view, once a



Walking along a tropical ridgeline, the only thing that restricts visibility is thick humidity.

blue sweep of ocean, now bloomed with turquoise atolls and flecks of islands. Beyond, a beige mesh of ridges greened and swelled into whopping mountains, their upper reaches poached by drifts of cloud. Every doubt evaporated. Possibilities sprawled before me.

In my guidebook two trails had won my attention, both of them 'Grand Randonnées' (big hikes). One in the north and one in the south, part of an international network of long distance footpaths, most of which lace Europe.

The southern trail, inaugurated some ten years ago, is considered a classic here and would be elsewhere if more outsiders could pin the island on a map. There are 5000 metres of climbing to do as it meanders for 120 kilometres over Grand Terre (the main

island of New Caledonia), through rolling scrub, forest and over the heads and shoulders of 5000 feet high mountains that reign over this patch of the Pacific. Prony, a village with a population of no more than a dozen, lies close to the trailhead and is the only settlement along the route. At the tail end of the 19th Century the village was home to French convicts, forced into logging to provide timber for the capital, Nouméa. More than a century on, I lumbered too. With nowhere to restock along the route, a week's supply of food in my pack set me stooping and sweating as I stamped from the coast into a crumpled landscape. The green ridges and hillocks and rust-coloured earth befit the island's ancient origins. Unlike many of the other Pacific archipelagos, New Caledonia's beginning

was not in recent volcanic activity; instead it's a vestige of the supercontinent Gondwana. Before spending several million years beneath the ocean, New Caledonia was once attached to Australia.

The trail climbed, skirting one waterfall, then another. By evening the last rays of sunlight were scattered off a wealth of waxy leaves, illuminating brain-shaped nubs of lichen beneath, the colour of glow-in-the-dark stars. An ecologist might know this as Maquis Shrubland, an arid rocky terrain, thick with peculiar flora; it felt like padding through a botanical garden. Almost 80 per cent of the plants here exist nowhere else on

Morning. The trail climbed again, even steeper now, through python-green brush where palms diced the sunlight into thin slots. We marched with our heads down, sending our huffing breath to the earth. An unspoken rule prevailed; nobody would admit to struggling. Calls of "ça va?" were bandied about, replies came later and later, in thinner voices, as we individually thought about whether we were OK, decided probably not, and then manufactured answers that could pass as genuinely upbeat. "Bien," I lied, between wheezes.

Two of my comrades, like me, were not graduates of other multi-day treks, but the

axis of a ridge. Land to each side tumbled and then sprawled into a wide plain, dotted with shadow from the cloud-blotched sky above. With gravity on our side at last, we pounded down the last few kilometres, threw off steaming boots and staggered through the open door of another of the tidy, wooden refuges which end each day on the trail. Chatter was soon mixed with the hum of stoves and the slurping of packet noodles and salted deer sausage scored from Nouméa. Groaning, we flopped our weary legs onto thin sleeping mats as if they were goose down.

We'd met no other hikers so far, but the following morning three figures dissolved out of the burnt remnants of last year's forest fire – it was a party of rangers. "Go between the breasts!" they said. An hour later two prodigious bulbs swelled out of the forest and we made our way up through the metaphorical cleavage. From the col we spied a blur of approaching rain. The deluge arrived in minutes, but peeking out of ponchos, we were soon cheered by vistas over Lake Yaté and the Blue River, with their halos of russet earth and wheeling birds of prey above.

On the other side of the col the forest grew darker and thicker as kinked palm fronds raked the murk. Trees drooled moss onto a smattering of carnivorous pitcher plants below. The trail had switched to a weave of roots and skittering geckos, warded by a toppling wall of fern, and as we scrambled on we were skinned by swarms of electric blue dragonflies. There were streams to wade too, home to the hulking trunks of felled trees, heaved into bygone torrents on the back of visiting cyclones.

The Blue River Provincial Park, like the shrubland before it, was home to strange and rare plants and trees. It was the giant tree ferns that first won my gaze, some of their trunks were over 50 feet in height and their umbrella of fronds, some of the largest leaves in the entire plant kingdom, conjured an impression of pre-history; tree ferns were knocking around the Carboniferous swamps over 300 million years ago. A giant kaori pine trailside was almost three metres in girth, and a sign stated that it began life a millennium ago. This fact, though, belies a less impressive one – the lion's share of these massive trees have been long since felled for timber or wiped out in fires.

As we marched on, the trail became thick with fallen leaves that deadened our footfall. Perhaps it was this silence that failed to startle the white chicken-sized bird that strayed across my path. I recognised the quag straight away. Known among the indigenous Kanak tribes as 'The Ghost of the Forest', an image of the bird adorns New Caledonia's



The New Caledonians rainforests are becoming fragmented by industrial developments, particularly from nickel mining.

earth. Nickel mining, which bolsters the New Caledonian economy, has destroyed much of the habitat, and 25 per cent of plant species here are considered at risk, with at least five of these now extinct. The Grande Randonnée picks its way through what's left of this shrinking world.

The evening sky, almost black overhead, lightened to a purple horizon where I spotted a wooden refuge, rouged in light cast by a campfire. Sweat-soaked and hungry, I picked up my pace. Fireside, three French hikers – Aurelie, Oliver and Tibault – had met by chance and decided to trek the Grande Randonnée together. A hip flask of rum was soon touring our posse and between glugs Tibault exclaimed with a grin: "You will walk wis us?" I offered a nod. His grin widened, "Tomorrow we are four!"

bare-chested, bandana-clad Oliver had battled trails all over Europe and was forever dancing down steep descents and wading fluently up the climbs.

"Zis trekking, is like finger in zee nose, non?" he said, metres from the refuge I needed many kilometres ago.

"What?"

"You don't 'av zis saying in English? Non? Like finger in zee nose? It means, It's easy! Like finger in zee nose!"

He gave a demonstration: Finger, in nose. Finger, in nose.

"Oh right, I see. Yeah, that's it." I faked a smile, 'easy' is not a word I would have used. As analogies go, a leg in my nose would have been a better one.

Relief came at last when the track finally bounded downwards along the plunging



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money and every tourist brochure. I froze so as not to scare it into flight, though I needn't have; the kagu is almost flightless, but it hissed at me as it waddled off on orange legs, unhurried, into the bush.

At over 1100 metres above the Pacific we filed up to a thin clearing and sucked up the view in silent awe. Great waves of resplendent green ridges, sliced by deep valleys, tracked into the far distance - a magic crescendo, worth all the toil. An air of achievement reigned as we all silently congratulated ourselves for reaching the highest point on the hike. Our reward followed - a yawning valley was the setting for the ultimate day before we finally dropped to a string of pellucid pools on the Dumbea River.

Being a Sunday, in the hottest month of the year, scores of families plied the banks. Having spent seven days together in the wilderness, our collision with humanity felt a rough one; children screamed, reggaeton boomed, and the satisfaction of a cool dip in the river ground against the suddenness of it all.

As we slumped, beaten on the riverbank, we were entertained by noisy kids who scampered up the loftiest trees, plummeting fifteen metres from over-hanging boughs into the water. A large extended Kanak family then clustered around us and we were quizzed about our escapades in the mountains. "You deserve this!" announced a silver-haired lady, delivering a glut of barbequed meat and fresh baguettes.

New Caledonia was christened by the British explorer James Cook who in 1774, when surveying the peaks, decided it reminded him of Scotland, 'Caledonia' its Latin alias.

Travelling back to Nouméa, New Caledonia's capital, in 36-degree heat while lion-coloured scrub passed by my window, I had to wonder why the well-travelled Cook had got it so wrong. He was also the man who coined the name 'New South Wales' though, so perhaps he had a vivid imagination and was a sucker for nostalgia.

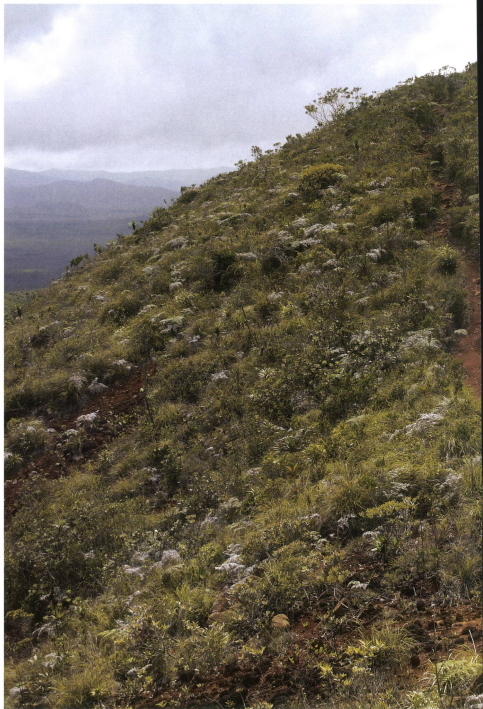
Like the landscape of New Caledonia, which consists of a central mountain range, mangrove swamps, torrid grassy plains, primary forest and shrubland, the skin tone of the New Caledonians milling around the streets of Nouméa was as richly various. The indigenous Kanaks are the arrivals most far flung in time. About a third of the population are 'Caldoche' - European descendants, primarily of the French, many of whom were convicts shipped to these remote shores at the end of the 19th Century. Contributing to the ethnic mélange are migrants from other Pacific islands and East Asia.

In Nouméa sea front bars opened onto a

main boulevard which nudged up against a beach. A thin spread of foreign tourists dozed and swam and rummaged about in the water. Kanak women in bright wrap-around skirts, pareos, with curlcues and floral motifs, shared the sand with younger Kanaks who preferred the Rasta tricolour and dreadlocks and who played zouk and reggaeton from mobile phones. The next bay was crowded with moored yachts and the bay after that was home to a tangle of kite surfers. This part of the tableau seemed reminiscent of life on the Mediterranean. The new, 75-kilometre Grand Randonnée journeys through the northwest of the island, a more populated and much wetter

zone. Tibault, having declared hiking a new passion, opted to come with me and kept me entertained with endearing malapropisms, suggesting, for instance, that if the weather turned we could "go hijacking". After careful questioning, I discovered my enigmatic friend meant "hitch-hiking", to my immediate relief.

In Nouméa I had heard local murmurings about a depression moving in and as we waited for a bus to the trailhead, palm fronds flapped maniacally in a punchy breeze. I began to wonder what was brewing in the Pacific and bound for New Caledonian shores.



Our starting point was the village of Tchamba where a scattering of thatched huts sat inaply next to satellite dishes and solar panels. Instead of the refuges of the southern trek, this vernacular accommodation would serve as our shelter each night and Kanak families would join us for food.

We set out hiking through arable land where Kanak farmers waved to us from their crops of yam and groves of fruit trees. Two young Kanak boys overtook us, pop-eyed, grinning, and shouldering huge rifles - off to hunt the deer that had proved tasty on the first trek.

Soon we came to a dripping forest where dollops of light fell onto the cobweb-crossed path. As we walked the light grew dirty and

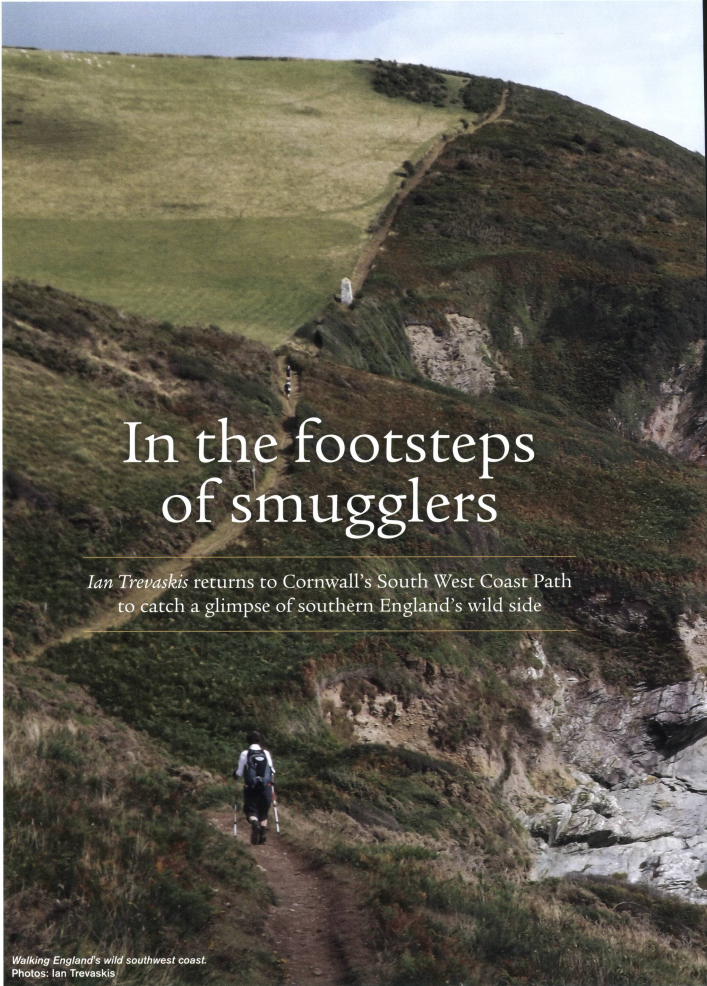
soon after the rain started, it became a cloudburst. Hunched over, consumed by ponchos, eyes hesitant to explore the world beyond the immediacy of the path, we missed an important junction. At the dead end we retraced our muddy footprints, which had quickly become small lakes of rainwater.

"Zis is crazy!" shouted Tibault over the whir of the growing wind. "We go back, yes?" It was the right call. The bridgeless rivers ahead would be too high to wade, so we made our way to the nearest road, hitchhiked and soon found ourselves in the town of Poindimie. Huddled under the cover of a gas station, a local man pulled up. 'Jump

in,' he said and pointed to the back seats. Back in Pierre's house we watched the magic trick of the palms and sat ponderously in darkness as 160 millimetres of rain soaked our part of the island in 24 hours. The storm was not quite a cyclone, though the giant swell and the bent palms suggested it might be worthy of the title. Eventually, Tibault, disillusioned, took a bus back to the capital. With memories from the first sublime trek still fresh, I decided to wait out the storm. Two days on I re-joined the trail that burrowed through gloomy mushroom-dotted forest and climbed up to ridges where it again rode humps of land and offered vistas of woodland awash with green. The trail dropped to a small refuge with a sign: 'Do Not Try To Cross River If Level High And Current Strong.' There was no bridge, no alternative place to cross, no village nearby. As I padded down the riverbank, I winced at the thought of backtracking 30 kilometres, especially after the recent rainfall. It was big, it was angry, but it looked crossable. I realised then that everybody swept away in violent torrents had probably, at one stage, thought the same thing. I waded out as far as I had the guts to. Water thrashed about my thighs, a fusillade of rocks fired into my legs and the river roared its threat to haul me away. I experimented with different channels, each time getting about halfway out, but there, waist-deep in the boil, the current swayed my legs and I retreated to hike back up the foul-scented muddy banks that the recent floods had left with a rug of decomposing sugar cane. The refuge was my home for a day, but every few hours I made a new sally to the river to check the water level where I'd left markers. Eventually, with the flood water retreating, I found an easier channel, made it to the far bank, punched the drizzle-thick air in celebration and trudged onwards. On the final day, startled deer ran from the path while I munched on wild pineapples, eventually making it to a village with more thatched huts. This village was encircled by a bamboo forest and multicoloured flowers and it was my last stop. New Caledonia winked a final farewell from the window of my departing plane. Maybe Cook had a point, I thought. The islands do have one striking similarity with the Scottish Highlands - hiking trails in their droves. As I surveyed those verdant mountains, my imagination tipped to all the unwalked forest-buried trails I was leaving behind. I knew I had been privy to an underrated side of these islands - an electrifying inland wilderness, beyond the resorts, lobster platters and sweeps of white sand. **W**

Oliver and Tibault hiking the last hills on the second day of the southern Grand Randonnée



A full-page photograph of a hiker with a backpack and walking sticks, seen from behind, as they ascend a steep, grassy hillside. The path is narrow and dirt-covered, winding up the slope. The hillside is covered in green grass and some low-lying shrubs. In the background, a white stone marker or monument is visible on the ridge. The sky is overcast with grey clouds. The overall scene is rugged and scenic, typical of the South West Coast Path in Cornwall.

In the footsteps of smugglers

Ian Trevaskis returns to Cornwall's South West Coast Path
to catch a glimpse of southern England's wild side

Walking England's wild southwest coast.
Photos: Ian Trevaskis



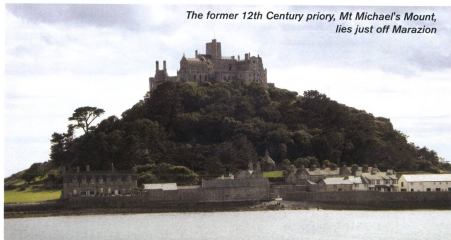
My breath comes in short, wheezing gasps and my thighs are searing with pain. I swipe sweat from my eyes and glance at my wife stoically plodding ahead of me. I force myself to follow in her footsteps up the ever-increasing incline. Below us the sea boils and crashes over jagged rocks. We're nearing the top of the climb and I'm consoled by the knowledge that soon I'll be able to take a breather before we tackle the next muscle-straining section of Cornwall's South West Coast Path on our way towards the village of Polperro. My wife and I had returned to the UK to complete another section of the path – this time from Penzance to Plymouth. Over two previous visits we'd managed to walk a grand total of 440 kilometres of the path from Minehead to Penzance and now that we've become totally smitten by the path's allure, we're determined to one day complete the iconic trail. We also want to experience again the wild and spectacular scenery of the rugged coastline, the beguiling hamlets tucked away in hidden coves and the mystique of coastal Cornwall that exudes magic and legend (not to mention the Cornish mussels, the hand-made pasties and the Cornish ciders!). The South West Coast Path is considered to be the UK's ultimate challenge for the long distance walker – a path stretching a whopping 1,014 kilometres, from Minehead in Somerset right around the bottom southwest corner of Britain and finishing at Poole Harbour in Dorset. The origins of the path lie in Cornwall's smuggling history when wreckers lit

their bonfires along the cliff tops to lure unsuspecting ships onto the rocks below before salvaging the booty that was duly washed ashore. The path was created so coastguards of the early 19th century had an effective way to patrol every cove, inlet and creek along this wild coast. By the beginning of the 20th century foot patrols had ceased and it wasn't until 1948 that a government report recommended the creation of a footpath around the entire south-west peninsula, however, it took until 1973 for the Cornwall Coast Path to be officially open and another five years before the rest of the path was completed.

HOW HARD?

The very nature of the path means that it sticks pretty close to the cliff tops, cliffs that make for some truly spectacular views, but because the path crosses innumerable river valleys, walkers have no choice but to make some extreme descents before long climbs back up again, resulting in some seriously strenuous and thigh-busting walking. We were only too well aware that one of the most challenging sections of the path would be the seemingly never-ending, steep ups and downs after the town of Par. After no less than five such descents and ascents, we staggered into the quaint little fishing village of Polperro late in the afternoon and headed for the nearest pub for a reviving ale. That said, walking the coast path only requires a reasonable level of fitness, a dash of guts and determination, a good pair of hiking boots and a couple of walking poles to

The former 12th Century priory, Mt Michael's Mount, lies just off Marazion



you up and down the steep bits.

To make it easy for walkers, the path is well signposted with most junctions marked with "Coast Path" signs as well as the wooden way mark posts with the path's distinctive logo of an acorn prominently displayed. Our most difficult navigation challenges tended to be finding our way out of a village and we did manage to miss the path leading off the beach at Godrevy Cove. It was only when we came upon two other walkers who had also missed the turn off that we all realised our mistake and had to backtrack.

Because of the nature of the Coast Path, walkers are advised that while distances may seem relatively short, the actual time taken to complete a section will take longer than anticipated due to the inevitable stops taken while you catch your breath; take photos; check the map and guidebook; drop in to a café or pub for lunch; or steal a moment to soak up the stunning beauty. When planning a day's hike, it's best to err on the conservative side and allow between five and seven hours of actual walking.

THE WALK

The saying goes that "it's the journey that counts, not the destination" and this adage proved to be spot on as we were repeatedly gobsmacked by the wild coastal scenery, the tiny hidden coves exuding mystery and romance from a bygone era, and the picture postcard fishing villages with their quaint cottages snuggled into hillsides and squatting around century old harbours.

We set out on an overcast morning from the bustling town of Penzance, once the centre of the tin mining industry in the 19th century and the birthplace of Sir Humphrey Davy, the inventor of the miners' safety lamp. This section on the way to Porthleven includes low cliffs and fields that eventually give way to craggy headlands, long sandy beaches and cliff top engine houses. As we walked, our gaze kept returning offshore to the impressive island of St Michael's Mount

as it dominated the skyline.

Between Porthleven and Mullion Cove the path follows low cliffs above extensive beaches, crosses Loe Bar, and passes the cliff top monument to Marconi and a number of picturesque coves before entering the rocky harbor at Mullion Cove. More spectacular coves and bays, combined with sheer cliffs provide scenic gems between Mullion Cove and The Lizard. Beyond The Lizard the path traverses countryside thick with blackthorn, gorse and bracken where we were treated to superb ocean views. After Coverack the path veers inland, the former official route now abandoned due to extensive flood damage. When we reached the inlet at Gillan Creek, we were pleased to see the tide was out, which meant we could wade the creek and avoid having to walk for another hour. At Helford we caught the ferry and after another three and a half hours arrived in Falmouth.

The walk from Falmouth to Portloe proved to be a day of endless rain coupled with a number of steep, soaring climbs. The swirling fog and sea mist and the heaving seas added to the wild and remote atmosphere. The following day the skies cleared and we enjoyed a picturesque stroll to Mevagissey, passing cottages built in the 1930s that featured in Daphne du Maurier's novel *The House on the Strand*. Between Mevagissey and Fowey we struck some of the toughest sections of the path with a number of steep and strenuous climbs which were followed up next day by more of the same as we headed towards Polperro. After Polperro the walking became much gentler as we walked along quiet and remote cliff tops to Portwrinkle. Our final day on the path lacked the spectacular views and grandeur we'd come to expect, but was compensated by the walk through Mount Edgumbe Park and at Cremyll we caught the ferry across the Tamar to Admiral's Hard Stonehouse and the port of Plymouth. After traipsing another four and a half kilometres through waterfront streets

we arrived at the official finish to this section of the walk - the Mayflower Steps. After 223 kilometres and 11 days of walking we were done...for now. All that remains is to complete the 351-kilometre section from Plymouth to South Haven Point in Dorset and we can tick this one off as done and dusted.

MAKE IT EASY ON YOURSELF

To make it easier on our 'senior' bodies and to ensure we'd enjoy this unique experience, we opted to use one of the many walking companies who booked our accommodation along the path and arranged for our luggage to be moved each day between accommodations. All we had to carry was a daypack stowed with wet weather gear (this is England after all), a first aid kit, sunscreen (just in case), a packed lunch, thermos and a water bottle.

One of the attractions of walking on the Coast Path is that it's not particularly far between villages and towns - we averaged around 18 kilometres a day - unlike walking in Australia where to walk between towns will most likely take more than a day or two of solid slogging. This meant we could take the time to soak up the coastal scenery, to sit a while and take it all in without feeling pressed to keep moving. The other bonus if an early start is made is that there's time to explore the picturesque villages with their maze of cobbled and winding streets while soaking up some of the history; or chill out for a lazy hour or so in a local tearoom and enjoy a Cornish cream tea of freshly baked scones served up with generous amounts of jam and clotted cream.

Despite the wild beauty and the scenic vistas, there are a few sections along the path, thankfully few and far between, where the drama and beauty gives way to plain ugliness. In particular is the section of the path after Coverack that takes walkers through Dean Quarry - an unsightly disused quarry where abandoned gentries loom silently over a barren and ravished landscape. On the outskirts of Par the path cuts through a golf course and by road around the back



of Par Docks where an extensive former china clay plant does nothing to enhance the walking experience. Both of these less than scenic sections did, however, serve to remind us that we were still in the real world!

One of the often-overlooked benefits of walking the Coast Path is the people you meet along the way. Among our fellow walkers, we met a young bloke from Germany who had come to surf but because the seas were flat and the surf non-existent, he'd decided to do a couple days walking instead. We walked across the Loe Bar, a shingle bar separating the sea from a large freshwater lagoon, with a couple of English teachers who'd taken a week off from family duties to complete a section of the path they hadn't walked. In the charming village of Porthleven we met three elderly Cornish gentlemen out for a morning stroll who explained to us the significance of the Duke of Cornwall's coat-of-arms that we'd noticed on many of the buildings: the fifteen dots or bezants on the shield represent the 15 pieces of gold that were paid by the people of Cornwall to the Saracens for the release of the Duke during the Crusades.

TOP PICKS – SAINT MICHAEL'S MOUNT

If time permits, walkers should set aside a day to visit this remarkable site just offshore from Marazion. In the First Century BC tin was taken on wagons to Saint Michael's Mount and then by sea to Brittany. In 1645 it was one of the last Royalist strongholds during the Civil War. The spectacular 14th Century castle perched on the Mount was originally a Benedictine Priory dating from the 12th Century. Access to the island can be achieved by walking across the causeway from Marazion at low tide or by one of the regular ferryboats. Well worth a day's visit.

THE LIZARD

The Lizard is at the most southerly tip of Britain and is a place where land and sea meet in a landscape of spectacular cliffs, rolling heath land and hidden coves. The exposed cliff tops between Mullion Cove

and Lizard Point provide some of the best coastal walking in Cornwall and as you approach Lizard Point the coastline becomes increasingly spectacular. We couldn't help but notice the colourful serpentine rock found around The Lizard – the green cliffs give the appearance of snakeskin, hence the name. This is the largest outcrop of serpentine on mainland Britain and is a popular medium with local sculptors.

MEVAGISSEY

The bustling working harbor of Mevagissey has to count as one of the highlights of our walk. Named after two saints, Meva and Issey, it is believed to be the site of a settlement way back in the Bronze Age and is mentioned in records dating as early as the 14th Century. Once the centre of Cornwall's pilchard industry the town's claim to fame is that it was the first village in England to have electric street lighting – a power station was built in 1895 and it ran on pilchard oil.

With its narrow streets and appealing old buildings constructed of cob and slate and its many gift shops, craft workshops, galleries, and cafes and pubs, Mevagissey is a place that invites visitors to linger. We wished we'd had more time to explore it properly.

POLPERRO

Originally a fishing village, this idyllic little town is squeezed between high hills and surrounded by tightly packed old fishermen's houses. Despite the summer tourists, we were enchanted by this former smuggling centre, where the trade in illicit goods reached its peak in the late 18th Century due to the high taxes imposed on imported goods, forcing the local fishermen to earn a few quid on the side by smuggling spirits, tea and tobacco from Guernsey. Walking the narrow winding streets we were reminded that we were treading on the paths where barrows of freshly caught fish were once wheeled and where, under cover of dark, brandy casks and tobacco bales were carted to cellars.

PLYMOUTH

Best known as the departure point of the Pilgrim Fathers on their way to the New World in 1620, Plymouth offers a wide range of historical attractions, with the area known as the Barbican containing no less than 100 listed buildings and the largest concentration of cobbled streets in Britain. The Barbican is one of Plymouth's oldest and prettiest parts and at the Mayflower Steps we were surprised to learn that it was from here that two ships that formed part of the First Fleet (Friendship and Charlotte) departed in 1787 to join the rest of the fleet at Portsmouth. **W**

MAPS: We used Harvey Maps, South West Coast Path 3 and 4. 1:40 000; 1 grid square = 1 km. These were provided by the walking company.

NEED TO KNOW

Getting there

Fly any major airline to Heathrow Airport where you can catch a train from Paddington Station to Penzance, a relaxing five hour journey.

When to go

April, May and June are touted as the best times with generally fine weather. August, when we walked, proved to be mostly warm and sunny with a couple of days of overcast skies and sea mist. Fortunately, we were only forced to dig our wet weather gear out of our packs on two occasions upon which we experienced a constant, soaking rain throughout the day.

Walking companies

A number of companies provide a range of itineraries to suit and can book your accommodation and arrange luggage transfers. We have used Budget Walking Holidays for all our walks. They provide relevant maps, a back-up service and a copy of the comprehensive and invaluable little book 'Cornwall Coast Path' which contains detailed walking maps, info on places to stay and eat, as well as points of interest.

Budget Walking Holidays:

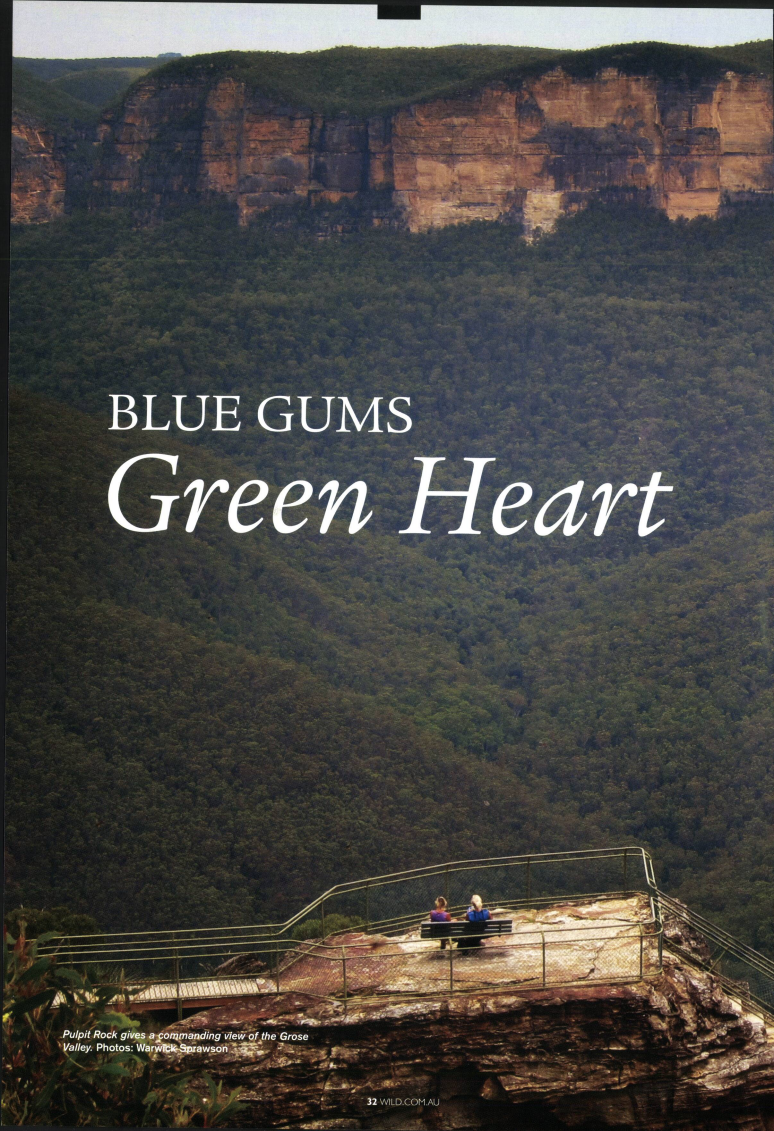
www.budgetwalking.co.uk

Useful References

Check out the South West Coast Path Association's website (www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk) and the South West Coast Path National Trail website (www.southwestcoastpath.com) for more information.



The fishing village of Mevagissey



BLUE GUMS *Green Heart*

Pulpit Rock gives a commanding view of the Grose Valley. Photos: Warwick Sprawson

Warwick Sprawson gives thanks for the success of one of Australia's first bushwalker-led conservation campaigns

The hand-carved sandstone steps lead through the rainforest towards the bottom of the canyon. Tree ferns sieve the overhead light leaving the moss-fringed path in gloom. Far above tourists are sweltering through the summer crowds of the Blue Mountains' 'must-see' tourist attractions, but here it is, cool and quiet, as Yasmin and I descend past dim grottos to the sound of trickling streams. At the base of the canyon the track follows Greaves Creek downstream. The path passes through a dark tunnel formed by an ancient rock fall to emerge beside a 10-metre high waterfall, a delicate curtain of water drifting past the outstretched fronds of ferns. This area is known as the Grand Canyon. Over millions of years the creek has worn a narrow, meandering route through the soft sandstone, leaving towering cliffs of harder stone either side. Three canyoneers in wetsuits, helmets and head-torches prepare to lower themselves into the narrow chasm containing the creek. They adjust their harnesses, check ropes and test straps before abseiling some 20 metres to the level of the water to scramble, swim and slide downstream. I'd rather be walking – especially when it's this spectacular. We continue along a claystone ledge that winds around the side of the canyon

beneath a deep rock overhang scoured out by ancient creek flows. Not far from the end of the overhang we break for lunch in a small clearing. We listen to the growl of thunder as we prepare our wraps.

There are a few spots of rain which we ignore as we tuck into our food. Mistake. Within seconds the rain is belting down, turning my wrap to mush in my hands. By the time we've got coats and packcovers on we're already soaked. Lightning flashes and the rain gets even harder as we dash back up the track towards the overhang, the track already awash with water.

We drop our packs in the shelter of the cave and watch the deluge in disbelief. The lip of the cave becomes a waterfall, a dancing wall of water sealing us from the outside world. There is nothing to do but put some warmer clothes on and make a cup of tea.

"I'm worried about those canyoneers," Yasmin says, pulling her scarf tight. "Isn't this the kind of flash storm they're always warning you about?" Thunder booms. "They seemed pretty experienced," I say, remembering the cool, professional way in which they tested their gear. But the water rushing towards the bottom of the canyon makes us increasingly worried, especially as there seems no way out except to get to the bottom of the slot.



The idyllic campsite at Acacia Flat

Before we can fret any more, we see the grinning canyoners splashing up the track towards us, carrying their ropes and gear. "It's exciting when it's like that," says the lead guy nonchalantly. "The water comes up quick. You just have to stay up high and keep on going." They squelch off along the wet path.

When the rain tapers to light drizzle we continue on our way. There's no point trying to skirt puddles – the track is puddles – so we resign ourselves to wet shoes.

The lower section of the Grand Canyon looks remarkable after rain. The deluge has created a water-world of rushing streams, dripping green foliage and ephemeral waterfalls. Ahead a waterfall peels over a 25-metre high cliff trailing its gossamer threads into the creek below. Giant straight-trunked coachwood and sassafras trees stretch to reach the light beyond the canyon's walls. The rain stops and a finger of sunshine presses into the canyon, intensifying the colours and releasing the smell of eucalypt and honey.

Reaching the junction with the track to Evan's Lookout, we turn onto the Rodriguez Pass Walking Track, which continues beside Greaves Creek. (The Evans Lookout Track leads out of the canyon, concluding the popular Grand Canyon daywalk loop.)

The trail has been neatly swept clean of bark and leaf litter by the rushing passage of water that has preceded us. The trail drops steeply and becomes rougher as we descend into the Grose Valley.

A fierce roar announces Beauchamp Falls. At the base of the falls are deposits of a type of hard rock that was favoured by the

local Darak people for making tools. It's a reminder that this walk is nothing new – Aboriginal people have been accessing the area for at least the last 22,000 years.

We're taking a break, scoffing some fruitcake, when four wild-eyed young backpackers – two men, two women – surge up the track and pool around us. Talking all at once, the bedraggled crew give a harrowing account of crossing Greaves Creek further down the track. "It was tough," says the leader of the group, a broad-shouldered Irishman who has walked the route once before.

"The leeches were horrific," adds another, nervously scanning her legs.

"It took us over an hour to get across," moans a third. "The water was so strong

we were sure we were going to have to turn back."

"It was really deep and it kept pressing us towards this huge drop," says the forth breathlessly. "It was terrifying."

We offer them some cake as we hear a dramatic account of thwarted attempts, heroic deeds, faltering nerves, sheer pluck, ingenuity and against-the-odds success. "Don't even try it," says the leader bluntly. "You really should just turn back now."

The other three nod in agreement.

Satisfied that we look sufficiently worried, they hasten away up the track towards Evans Lookout.

Figuring we'll have to strike camp in the hope that the waters go down overnight, we decide to walk to the creek and scout about for a flat place to camp. We arrive at the notorious creek crossing almost expecting a wall of water to sweep us off our feet. Instead we find an ankle-deep flow rippling across a series of smooth rocks. We assess it for a while, wondering what we are missing, then shrug and wander across. It's difficult to reconcile the backpackers' hellish descriptions with this gentle flow. Were they talking about somewhere else? Or had the water dropped considerably in the last 15 minutes? Whatever the case, we're happy to be safely across the "terrifying" creek. We set up camp just past the junction of Greaves and Govetts creeks among tall cedar-like trees and birds scouring their thick bark for insects. As the afternoon sun continues to push away the cloud, the drone of cicadas starts up, the sound rising and falling in hypnotic waves.

In the morning, we leave our backpacks at



The Grand Canyon - waterworld after rain

camp and take a faint trail upstream along Govetts Creek through dewy maidenhair fern, flax lily and delicate fringe-lillies. After about 700 metres we arrive at Blackwall Glen, a bend in the waterway where a 10-metre high sweep of grey graphite-like rock curls over the creek like a petrified wave, summoning the eye upwards, higher and higher, to the sandstone cliffs and terraces that loom hundreds of metres above. Another 500 metres up the creek are Edenderry Falls, a compact cascade of white water flowing down a funnel of black rock into a deep, wide pool. We sit listening to the restless water. A rufous fan-tail watches us, swivelling and fidgeting on its perch, before dismissing us and fluttering away. Returning to camp, we don our packs and lumber downstream along Govetts Creek to reach Junction Rock and Govetts Leap Brook. Continuing along Govetts Creek I finally tire of breaking the spider webs draped across the path with my face. From then I walk with one walking pole raised ahead of me like some kind of crazed bandleader. The creek continues to babble below us while across the valley totem-like orange sandstone bluffs and ridges rise to meet a thick cap of cloud. We reach Acacia Flats, a lush grassy plain with an understory of wattle saplings, their bright yellow flowers bright against the fire-blackened butts of the surrounding gums. We pitch our tent on the soft grass while a yellow-tailed black cockatoo shrieks news our arrival like a town crier.

After setting up the tent we walk a few hundred metres further along the track to one of the most famous features of the Grose Valley, the Blue Gum Forest. The blue gums are strikingly different to the other vegetation we've seen on the walk, their smooth silver-grey trunks soaring 40 metres to blend into the overcast sky. The trees are evenly spaced in elegant ranks, each stately silver pole topped by a sparse head of leaves.

A spiritual place for many hikers in NSW, the existence of this forest is a living monument to the many tough battles fought to preserve this area for future generations.

In the 1830s the Blue Gum Forest and the Grose River were being considered for the route of the main western railway line. By 1857, surveyors and engineers were constructing a bridle track along the river in preparation for construction to begin. The scheme was only reluctantly abandoned when the £800,000 cost of constructing a two-mile long tunnel under the Darling Causeway to Hartley

Vale was deemed too expensive.

In 1865, prospectors found shale oil in the valley, but had difficulty exploiting it due to the rough terrain. In the late 1860s a dam was proposed to boost Sydney's water supply, a scheme which reappeared periodically right up to the 1920s.

In 1927, a farmer called Clarrie Hungerford obtained a 40-acre lease in the Blue Gum Forest and constructed a track into the valley. In 1931, hikers from the Sydney Bushwalkers and the Mountain Trail Club came across the farmer ringbarking trees in the forest. He told them he planned to clear the gums and

plant walnuts. Alarmed at the news, a committee was formed to try to protect the forest, including the famed conservationist Myles Dunphy, who was already developing his proposal for a Blue Mountains National Park. After lobbying the authorities to no avail, they came to the conclusion that the only way to protect the area was to strike a deal with Hungerford to relinquish his lease. The farmer agreed to give up his rights for £130 – an enormous sum at the time, particularly during a depression.

The group started fundraising through donations, balls, socials and loans,



The author makes a friend in the Blue Gum Forest

publicising the plight of the forest in newspapers and pamphlets, finally managing to scrape the money together by the agreed date. With the lease revoked, the government created the Blue Gum Forest Reserve in 1932. It was the first time Australian bushwalkers had banded together to protect a natural area, a success that spurred on numerous other actions, resulting – directly and indirectly – in many of the national parks that Australians cherish today. The Blue Gum Forest Reserve was added to the Blue Mountains National Park in 1959. We spend the afternoon paying tribute to

these campaigns in the best way possible – by enjoying the area. We admire stately grandfather trees, a dozen metres or more around at the base, and take a swim in the waist-deep creek, taking in the uninterrupted view across the valley to where massive slabs of sandstone rise, squatting imperiously on the lapping shore of the green eucalypts below.

As we cook breakfast the next morning, we remember it's Christmas Day. A small Sheoak makes a great Christmas tree as we sit under its boughs to eat our meal. Leaving camp, bright balls of wattle are

strewn across the path, knocked down by the showers overnight. We take Perrys Lookdown Walking Track, leaving Govetts Creek and beginning the climb out of the gorge. We toil up the eroded track entering a forest dominated by angophoras, the trees' cocoa-coloured bark peeling in patches to reveal the creamy white trunk beneath. A lyrebird rakes at the fallen bark and leaf litter with a foot, keenly inspecting the newly exposed ground for insects.

It's a steep, demanding ascent and sweat drips down my forehead as we climb through low cloud and into sunshine. Dockers Ladder poses the final challenge:

a set of stone steps, which leads straight up a stone chute to Perrys Lookdown at the top of the valley.

At Perrys we drink deeply from our water bottles and enjoy the view over the Grose Valley in the knowledge that the rest of the walk is relatively flat.

After a four-kilometre slog along a dirt road we reach Pulpit Rock. The viewpoint is regarded as one of the best in the Blue Mountains with a narrow diamond-shaped rock pillar offering a dramatic 280-degree view. The sandstone cliffs beside the lookout drop straight down, as clean as a cut through cake, hundreds of metres to the trees below. Yasmin and I look at each other. How the hell had we got down there? And back up again?

We take the Cliff Top Track along the rim of the valley towards Evans Lookout, where we began our circuit. The vegetation is stunted and hardy, adapted to the poor soils and strong winds. We do a double take as a dragonfly the size of a cigar flies by. It is a *Petalura gigantea*, the giant dragonfly, with a wingspan of some 14 centimetres. These beasts only live in the Blue Mountain's hanging swamps, a specialised type of vegetation that clings like plaque to the side of these sheer cliffs. Two waterfalls hove into view – Horseshoe Falls and, more distantly, Govetts Leap ('leap' is apparently an old Scottish word for waterfall). The twin falls, separated by perhaps 500 metres, look as thin and delicate as lace ribbons as they drape hundreds of meters down the sandstone cliffs.

As we approach Evans Lookout, it clouds over and there is a flash of lightning and an ominous rumble of thunder. We welcome the change. It seems only appropriate that one of the most dramatic hikes in Australia ends with a suitably dramatic conclusion. W

MAPS: Katoomba and Mt Wilson 1:25,000.



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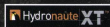
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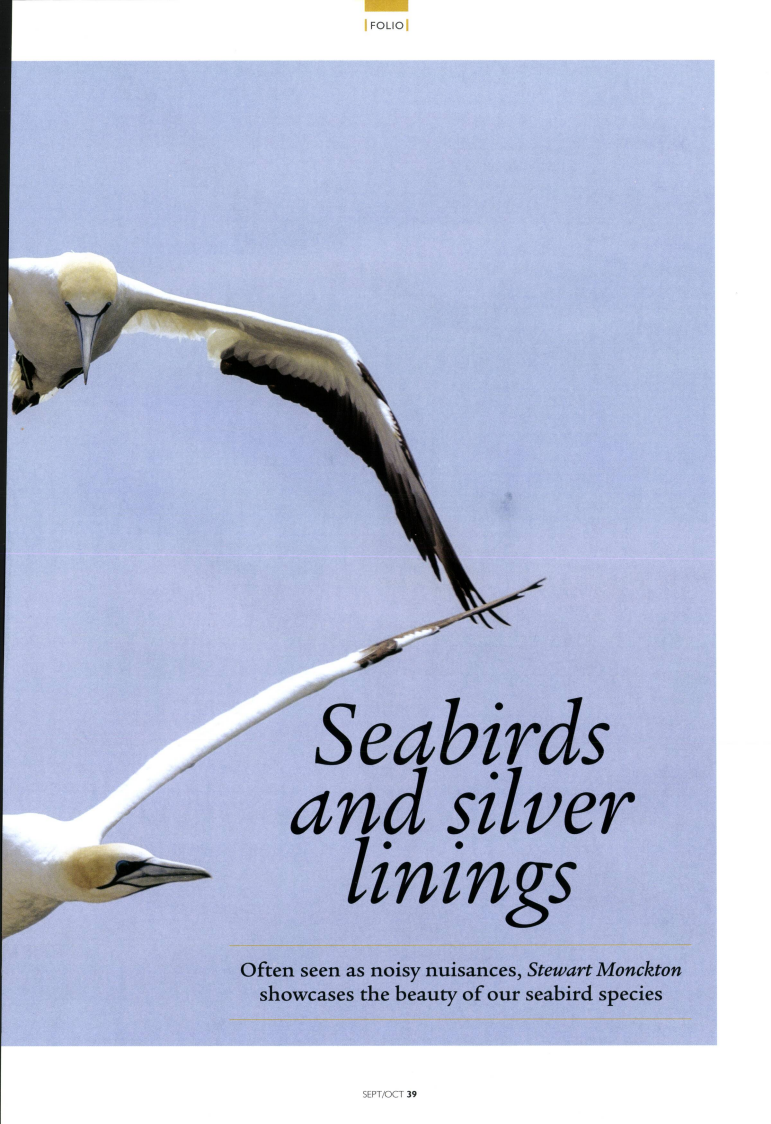


Trusted in the wild for over 30 years

Photo by Geoff Murray

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A photograph of two seabirds, likely boobies, in flight against a clear, pale blue sky. The bird in the upper left is shown from a side profile, with its wings spread wide, revealing dark feathers on the underside of the wings. The bird in the lower left is shown from a more frontal perspective, also with its wings spread. The overall composition is dynamic and captures the grace of the birds in flight.

Seabirds and silver linings

Often seen as noisy nuisances, *Stewart Monckton* showcases the beauty of our seabird species



Previous page: The Australasian gannet (*Morus serrator*) flies up to 500km per day in search of food.

Clockwise from left: The silver gull (*Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*) is generally regarded as a noisy pest, particularly in the presence of fish and chips. A gannet can spy fish swimming metres below the surface of the water and will dive to retrieve them.

A pair of shy albatross (*Thalassarche cauta*). These medium-sized albatross are common in southern Australian waters and are also called mollymawks.

Born in England in the early 1960s, Stewart Monckton had the kind of local, free-range childhood that seems to have disappeared in the modern age. He loves the local and the wild. Since migrating to Australia, Stewart is glad to have so many more places to explore.



Peace and paddling

Kayaker *Sandy Robson* has spent the past four years striving to complete an epic paddling journey – from Germany to Australia.

Living in Australia, it's easy to believe we live in a peaceful world.

As technology improves we can further convince ourselves that the quality of life under this peace is also improving, and that flow-on effects mean these benefits of peace and happiness spread beyond our borders to the rest of the world. But every now and then an example presents itself to prove that the world isn't what we thought it was and, worse still, the situation may even be regressive.

Under the iron rule of the Mongol Empire, the people living along the Silk Road of the 13th and 14th Centuries experienced what is believed to be one of the longest and most complete periods of peace ever experienced over such a broad expanse of land and plethora of cultures. During these times, it was commonly said that "a maiden bearing a nugget of gold on her head could wander safely throughout the realm". Not only is this no longer true of the nations once controlled by the Mongol Empire, it seems a fantasy for any place we might imagine today.

ADVENTURE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Just seven years prior to the outbreak of WWII in 1932, a German-born adventurer by the name of Oskar Speck embarked on a journey that began in the Danube River and concluded in Australia just seven years later. Travelling by folding kayak, Speck's travels would see him passing through the Middle East, Pakistan, India and Southeast Asia. Such an undertaking does not occur without its fair share of hardship, which in Speck's case meant deprivation, harsh weather and the occasional threat of violence from the people he met along the way (his diary describes several such incidences, of being shot at and of being detained by indigenous people, among other things). However, Speck's journey went rather smoothly overall, until he gained shore in Australia. "I had reached my goal, after seven years and ... I walked straight into internment, for Australia and Germany were at war," he wrote. Despite being made a prisoner of war for the duration of WWII, Speck went on to become an opal merchant in Sydney and came to consider Australia his home. Years after his death in 1995, Speck's amazing kayaking

odyssey is being recreated by an Australian paddler.

Sandy Robson's passion for outdoor adventure was fostered during her time spent studying Outdoor Education at Latrobe University's Bendigo campus in 1993 and has since considered such pursuits to be her profession as well as her hobby. Having joined Western Australia's Sea Kayaking Club in 2002, her evolution towards becoming a dedicated paddler was further promoted when a hip replacement two years later meant she had to give up bushwalking completely.

IN SPECK'S WAKE

Robson's own odyssey began soon after a failed attempt to circumnavigate Australia by kayak. It was 2007 and she had been making good progress in her journey until she came to Cape York. It was here that Robson was attacked by a crocodile and was forced to abandon her plans.

"After a year of paddling for that expedition in 2007, I was motivated to undertake another long journey," she says. "The Oskar Speck expedition captured my attention

because of its significance to the history of sea kayaking. It's the longest sea kayak journey every made and has never been retraced in modern times, so I thought 'Why not give it a go?'

This kernel of an idea evolved into a full year of planning in 2010, until Robson came to actually commence her journey in 2011. Just as Speck had done, Robson planned to set off from Ulm, Germany on the Danube River, but unlike the German adventurer, Robson recognised the need to recreate the trip in several stages.

"I broke the journey into five stages over five years in order to make the whole thing more manageable as far as funding is concerned," Robson explains. "Initially I was returning to Australia between these stages to work so that I could raise additional funds, but now I'm trying to complete the remainder of the trip with the assistance of a few key sponsors."

SOLO ADVENTURE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Far from Silk Road's maiden with the gold nugget on her head – and even surprisingly more challenging than Speck's own experiences – Robson's adventure has been dogged by setbacks in the form of closed borders, rough weather and hostile locals. As a result, Robson has had to regularly readjust her plans to encompass a world in turmoil. "During the first leg of the journey in 2011, I wasn't able to retrace Speck's route into Syria due to the war. I was also forced to avoid the rivers in Iraq in order to avoid the landmines left there by Saddam Hussein's regime."

Nor was Robson able to paddle in Iran and Pakistan because of security concerns. Yet her greatest trials hadn't yet begun. "I faced the hardest challenges I have ever encountered on India's east coast, but I had by then

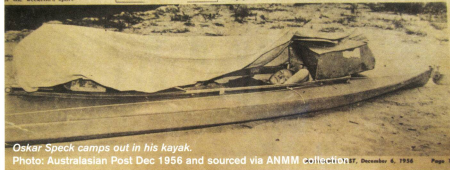
With it in their lower decks. And it being so low a small beachhead to shore a boat is too expensive for the ordinary man. What was needed was a boat that would not only be able to float, but also be able to be pulled up on a beach. This is a small boat, easily carried by hand or towed by the side of the weekend's sport.

YOU can sleep in a kayak. Waterproof tanks lift out of bow and stern and a canvas shelter you from the sun. But Oskar says that to sleep in the craft in open water would be suicide.

It was a pleasant surprise everywhere. A little indicated while one was actually travelling, more than a little perhaps, but it brought me privileges which your passport in an ocean liner's de luxe suite can never know. I will always remember meeting the Governor of British Bahruland, Sir Mervyn Carter. A shooting party had been arranged for

my underdog team, and one hurried forward and shook my hand warmly. "Let me congratulate you. My friend," he said. "A splendid performance."

He insisted on taking me to the marquee, and with his own hands moved me with a small while he listened to my story. Two seasons



Oskar Speck camps out in his kayak.

Photo: Australasian Post Dec 1956 and sourced via ANMM collection 87, December 4, 1956 Page 7

developed a good attitude to facing challenge, knowing that I would endure the tough times and get through the lows to find the next high." During this stage of the journey, she was repeatedly thrown from her vessel by rough seas and was even attacked by fisherman who assumed she was some kind of terrorist.

More recently, Robson has been forced to wait for weeks and sometimes months in Southeast Asia for calmer seas. Even funding for the trip has been far from straightforward. In March 2013, Robson spent an entire year back home in Australia working while her journey was put on hold. Challenges aside, Robson is passionate about completing this journey in the hope that it draws further attention to the plight of the environment, while also encouraging others to get out and experience nature. "My journey is also helping to promote water sports and kayaking in nations where these activities are just developing, and I am encouraging more women to participate. It feels great to be a positive role model for kayaking," she says.

For all her effort, Robson has garnered some

positive attention that has culminated in her becoming this year's recipient of the Australian Geographic Society's Nancy Bird Walton Award, which has helped fund her journey from Singapore to Papua New Guinea. She also now holds the title of the only person to have circumnavigated Sri Lanka by kayak.

Robson regularly sends trip updates out to her followers online via a blog, and she also hopes to write a book about her travels upon her return. Until then, she hopes that the last leg of her tour – via Indonesia and Papua New Guinea back to Australia – goes ahead without incident. [W](http://www.sandy-robson.com)



www.sandy-robson.com

SANDY ROBSON'S JOURNEY: FROM GERMANY TO AUSTRALIA

- **Stage 1** – Germany to Cyprus, covering 4,224 kilometres from May to September, 2011. Being prevented from paddling through Iran and Pakistan, Robson then made plans to take up the journey from India.
- **Stage 2** – India, Gujarat to Tamil Nadu, covering 2,260 kilometres along the west coast of India from December of 2012 to March in 2013.
- **Stage 3** – Sri Lanka and India's east coast, covering 3,196 kilometres from March to August in 2014. Here, Robson had to wait for two months for calmer seas for the crossing to the Sunderbans and Bangladesh.
- **Stage 4** – West Bengal to Papua New Guinea, with 3,974 kilometres completed from November last year until now, Robson is yet to complete this stage of her journey.
- **Stage 5** – The final leg of the journey will see Robson return home to Australia.



Showing people the kayak in Bangladesh at Nijhum Dwip Dec 2014. Photo: Khandaker Rahman

Federation Track WEST

Having blazed a track from Sydney to Melbourne that he dubbed Federation Track South, *Bill Avery* sets out once again to mark a route from Melbourne to the Twelve Apostles

Between 1991 and 1998 I bushwalked from Sydney to Melbourne in a series of long-distance treks along a route I dubbed 'Federation Track South' as it connected the Federation Pavilion in Sydney's Centennial Park with the Royal Exhibition Building in Melbourne, the site of the first sitting of the Australian Federal Parliament. For the next few years I managed the IBM Technology Volunteers at the Sydney Olympic Games and in 2001 retired for the third time and moved to the Blue Mountains. I thought my long-distance walking days were over, but a phone call from Ian Edwards, who also walked Federation Track South, re-ignited the old flame. I had mapped out a potential route in the early 1990s so this was all the excuse I needed to buy more 1:25,000 maps to establish a detailed route.

We soon finalised a route for the first stage from Melbourne to the Twelve Apostles so, on a hot January day in 2006, we set off from the Royal Exhibition Building in Melbourne on our first trek to Mornington. The historic buildings and iconic locations of Melbourne City soon gave way to the Yarra River, with rowing fours and eights scuttling across the river like giant water bugs. Beyond that the green lawns and cool shade from the ancient exotic trees of the Kings Domain provided pleasant relief before the stark grandeur of the Shrine of Remembrance and the shimmering reflections of Albert Park Lake. St Kilda Beach may lack the crashing surf and headlands of the coastal surf beaches, but it has its own beauty and charm. Beyond the clear, blue water of Port Phillip Bay there are glimpses of the high country to the south and west. There are usually small yachts and windsurfers racing across the sparkling waves

with the occasional speedboat carving a wide white furrow along the bay. And then there are the people. People of all ages and sizes - cycling, jogging, walking, roller-blading, sun-baking, posing or just having a good time at the beach.

The crowds diminished as we travelled south along the edge of the bay. Native vegetation, assisted by some excellent regeneration and coastal protection fences, soon replaced formal bayside parks. Past Sandringham the concrete and bitumen paths disappeared and soft, sandy footpaths wound their way through the coastal foreshore with its twisted ti-trees and shady she-oaks. The cliff line also slowly rose and the views across the bay became even more interesting. The high blue ranges of the You Yangs to the west across the glittering blue water of Port Phillip Bay and the imposing hummock of Arthurs Seat to the south grew larger on the horizon. The views of Red Bluff and Half Moon Bay were a reminder of southern France and the long stretch of golden beach from Mentone to Frankston were a precursor to the beaches along the Surf Coast.

At Mordialloc, we veered away from the coast past the remnant of the giant Carrum Carrum Swamp at Edithvale Wetlands to the Patterson River whose levees and floodgates were reminiscent of Holland — all that was needed were a few windmills. At Carrum, the walking route returned to the foreshore along the cool, shady (it was still over 400C!) Seaford Foreshore Track, continuing through to Frankston. At Frankston, our route followed Kananook Creek, which was unexpectedly picturesque and leafy, even though it runs through the heart of the busy suburb of Frankston. At its mouth the walking route crossed the creek on a spectacular footbridge and ran along a

boardwalk and promenade to the base of Olivers Hill just south of Frankston. From here to Mornington the track ran along sandy beaches, across protected coves and over rocky platforms intermingled with short, sharp climbs over headlands with excellent views up and down the coast. Some of the mansions in this area are wonderful examples of 1920s and 1930s architecture and there are one or two stunning modern homes. For several kilometres the track runs along beaches that are backed by vast estates or golf courses, so the feeling of remoteness begins to grow.

From Mornington to Mount Martha there was an excellent walking track - Nunns Walk - and wonderful seascapes of the cliffs and coves of southern Port Phillip Bay. Mount Martha and Arthurs Seat provide a majestic background to the views from the numerous lookouts. The crystal clear water, multi-coloured rock strata and colourful seaweed formed a wonderful mosaic. However, between Mount Martha and Pebble Cove the coastal path disappeared completely. Fortunately, we found a route up the delightful Sunshine Creek to the top of Mount Martha, which provided unexpected views of Schnapper Point and, in the haze-filled distance across Port Phillip Bay, the last view of Melbourne's skyscrapers. At Pebble Beach the Coast Path re-appeared and Tassels Creek has the most extraordinary creek crossing encountered in 3,700 kilometres of bushwalking.

Although the Port Phillip coastline is interesting and scenic, it is at Dromana that the real adventure and the first real climb started. Port Phillip Bay was left behind as we climbed up Arthurs Seat, with its succession of wonderful panoramas of the southern Mornington Peninsula and Port Phillip Bay.



*Lion Headland and Cape
Volney from the Old Coach
Road behind Johanna
Beach. Photos: Bill Avery*

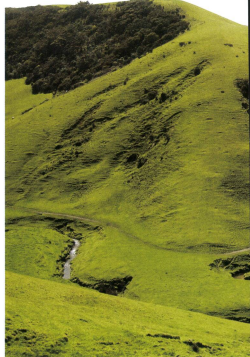
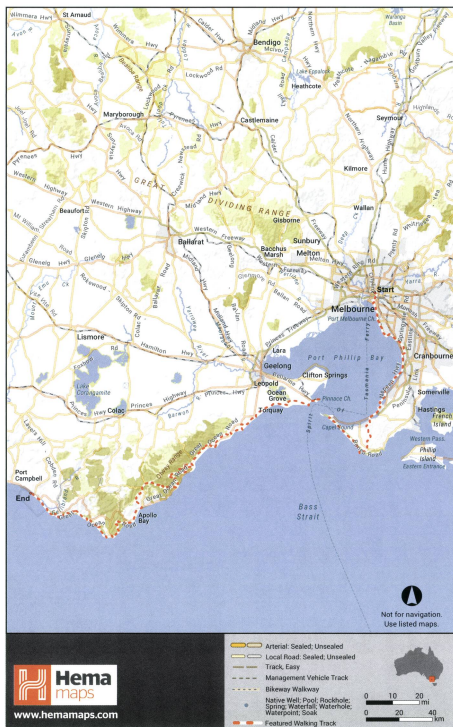
to cross Mornington Peninsula to Cape Schanck on the Two Bays Track. A short diversion to 'Seawinds' provided more excellent views and interesting highlights while the descent down the Main Ridge to Drum Drum Alloc Creek revealed the first pastoral and agricultural scenery. At Greens Bush the scenery changed again as the Two Bays Track wandered through one of the few patches of old growth forest on the peninsula. The last stretch of the Two Bays Track from 'Highfields' to Cape Schanck was a marvel of contrasts. One minute we were walking past mobs of kangaroos grazing on grassy clearings; the next minute we were looking over the golden beach of

Bushrangers Bay with pounding surf, eroded basalt cliffs and the cry of seabirds on the wind. From Cape Schanck to Sorrento Ocean Beach the scenery was magical. First, the dramatic basalt cliffs and churning seas of Cape Schanck and Selwyn Fault followed by a long golden strand interspersed with limestone headlands and ledges. We passed rock stacks and twisted limestone cliffs with their grey-green cap of coastal banksia scrub that perfectly complemented the golden strips of the sandy coves. The white foam of the surf fringed the golden-green of the shallow water that changes abruptly to the cobalt blue of Bass Strait. Lookouts abounded and

birdlife was prolific. From Sorrento Ocean Beach to Sorrento Pier we made our way through the outskirts of the delightful seaside resort of Sorrento, with its curious mixture of limestone colonial mansions, modern beach cottages and relics of the 'steamers' that once plied their tourist trade from Melbourne.

A ferry trip took us across the entrance of Port Phillip Bay to the striking Victorian splendour of Queenscliff. If you half-close your eyes, you can almost see the carriages bobbing along Hesse Street and hear the ghostly echo of horses' hoofs. Maybe that isn't distant thunder but the faint resonance from gunnery practice at Fort Queenscliff. Beyond Queenscliff, as far as Jan Juc, the modern era of surf and sun returned as their walking route ran through coastal reserves and along the broad, golden surf beaches of the Bellarine Peninsula. The coastal scenery was splendid and quite different to the rugged cliffs of the lower Mornington Peninsula. As it was summer, the wide surf beaches from Port Lonsdale to Jan Juc were teeming with board-riders, body-surfers, kids tearing along the edge of the surf and people just bobbing up and down in the waves.

At Bells Beach the coastline changed dramatically. The cliffs returned, but now they were tall golden sandstone edifices towering from the narrow beaches below but the offshore reefs, remnants of the battle between land and ocean, provide some of the best surfing in the world. The Surf Coast Walk wanders along the edges of these cliffs and at Ironbark Basin it rambles across a



geological phenomenon that provides a huge forested amphitheatre as a backdrop to the beautiful beaches around Point Addis. The sandstone cliffs return at Anglesea North and slope gradually down to the Anglesea River basin. At Aireys Inlet the Cliff Walk is a delightful contrast with its multicoloured cliffs, sea caves and offshore stacks. In places it is like a Cornish postcard.

From Split Point Lighthouse, the Surf Coast Walk crosses the sand-filled mouth of Painkalac Creek, through Fairhaven and across the heath and scrub to Moggs Creek Picnic Area. The Federation Track then follows a walking track back to the coast and a stunning lookout over Eastern View Beach before dropping down to the beach and rock-hopping along the coast at low tide around spectacular Cinema Point and Big Hill to Lorne. After sampling the fleshpots of Lorne, we followed a path under towering blue gums to Point Grey where we linked with an old tramway path to St George River and the beginning of a truly beautiful walk to many of the waterfalls in the Lorne hinterland and the fascinating Canyon with its Jurassic Park environment. Finally, we climbed over a ridge and down into the wonderland of Cumberland River. A walk along the last wild river on the Otway Coast leads to a pretty camping ground at Cumberland Reserve, where the character of the walk changed completely. The Cumberland Track was a solid climb and then became a navigational challenge as it ran along the ridge tops on an old, badly overgrown logging track. Despite the lack of markers or footpad, this track has some



The Twelve Apostles marked the end of this stage of our journey

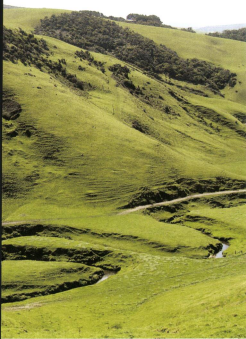
remarkable views and will be welcomed by experienced walkers as a test of their stamina and navigational skills.

From the Cumberland Track we wandered back to the coast through towering gums. The cobalt blue sea appearing through the trees heralded our arrival into the tiny seaside holiday settlements of Separation Creek and Wye River with their fascinating logging history. At Wye River, the Federation Track follows an old fire trail up and over the ridges to Kennett Road and down an old logging track across the Kennett River with its tree ferns and crystal clear water followed by another short but steep climb to Coopers No 2 Road. Along this old logging road, we climbed to the crest of the Otway Range through leafy cathedrals of Blue Gums and Manna Gums. Mt Sabine Road runs along the crest of the Otway Range to the fire tower on Mount Sabine, the highest point on Federation Track West between Melbourne and the Mount Lofty Range in South Australia. Now the descent to the coast and Apollo Bay had begun. The first couple of kilometres were on the busy Forrest-Apollo Bay Road but this road was soon left behind as we meandered down quiet backcountry roads between the Great Otway National Park on one side and pastoral country on the other. Eventually, the Park was also left behind and stunning panoramic views opened out across the coastal valleys with Bass Strait beyond. This finished in a steep descent down to the coastline at Skenes Creek and we finished this wonderful section with a walk along a wide, flat beach and a meandering path to the sybaritic delights of Apollo Bay.

At Apollo Bay, we joined the Great Ocean Walk that now stretches from Apollo Bay

to the Twelve Apostles. It now includes some of the most spectacular coastal walking anywhere in the world. One day you are wandering through towering forests of mountain ash, the next day the track winds through wind-twisted groves of messmates and manna gums hosting one of the largest koala colonies in Australia. On the following days you wander above a magnificent, deserted surf beach, a cliff line of wind-carved fretwork and coastal views of jaw-dropping splendour. You return to the coast and ramble past hidden coves, fern-lined creeks and a picturesque stone croft tucked away in a beachside gully. Every time you climb, you are rewarded with stunning views and every time you wander along the beaches and rock ledges, there are new sights and old wrecks to be seen. Wildlife abounds with koalas and wallabies, as well as the occasional echidna. The final stretch from Princetown to the Twelve Apostles is a sensational finale with views of this international icon that the tourists never see. [W](#)

Upper Johanna Valley from the Old Coach Road behind Johanna Beach



WANT TO WALK FEDERATION TRACK WEST?

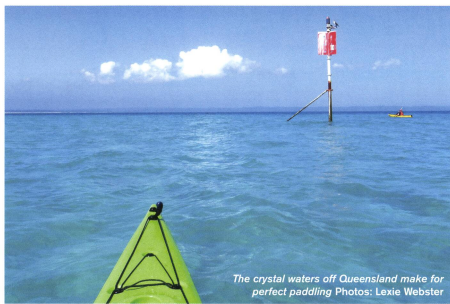
An online guide to this first stage of Federation Track West is currently available from Amazon, Apple and Kobo e-book stores. Additional information on the track, including downloadable GPX files and sequenced waypoints are available from the Federation Track website.



federationtrack.com.au

Paddling in *paradise*

Travelling by sea kayak, *Lexie Webster* takes advantage of optimal weather to go whale spotting between Hervey Bay and Fraser Island



The crystal waters off Queensland make for perfect paddling Photos: Lexie Webster

They say bird poo brings good luck. As I stood in the spring sunshine on the boat ramp of Urangan Harbour on the outskirts of Hervey Bay, about 300 kilometres north of Brisbane, kitted up for a five-day kayaking trip to Fraser Island's northwest coast, I wondered whether the size of the poo was directly proportional to the amount of good fortune it supposedly brought. Having just been sprayed with excrement from a pelican resting on the lamppost above me, I certainly hoped so. So it was with (presumably) a lot of luck on our side, that my friend and I began our paddle across the Great Sandy Strait.

Despite feeling somewhat insignificant as we paddled out of the harbour, we were confident our experience would be far more authentic than that of the patrons on the super yachts and sailboats that rose above us. We were closer to the water, more exposed to the elements.

Fraser Island is traditionally known as K'gari, meaning paradise, and as self-proclaimed enviro-nerds, it's hard to pinpoint what we were more excited about. Maybe it was the crystal clear waters, reminiscent of far-off tropical destinations like the Caribbean and home to turtles, dolphins, dugongs and stingrays. Perhaps it was the seemingly never-ending white beaches, decorated with

the flocks of migratory shorebirds that earn its wetlands international recognition under the Ramsar Convention. Most likely though, it was the notion of paddling with humpback whales, which having already birthed their calves, would soon be returning to Antarctica.

The idea of a kayaking trip to Fraser Island had morphed from a group of us trekking its 'Great Walk' into two of us paddling to the island, famed as the largest sand island in the world and listed as a World Heritage Area. We'd settled on September as the perfect time of year because it was still whale season, but lacked the strong winds that frequently blow in August. We'd done our research on the tides and winds and on the morning of departure, had registered with the Volunteer Marine Rescue.

After stopping for a snack in the shallow turquoise waters of Pelican Banks, we were confident we'd make the 12-kilometre crossing within a few hours of launching. Then the sea fog rolled in. It was sunny and midday and I'd always associated sea fogs with cold mornings along rugged coastlines. Kevin Heitmann from Volunteer Marine Rescue Hervey Bay was able to clear up some of my confusion, explaining: "They can happen any time of year but only under specific atmospheric, wind and temperature

HOW TO GET THERE:

Hervey Bay is approximately 300km north of Brisbane city, Queensland. Allow about 3.5hr for the drive. Urangan boat harbour is about a 10-minute drive southeast of Hervey Bay, located at the end of Jetty Road, Urangan.

WHEN TO GO:

If you'd like to see whales, then visit the area between August and October when they're present on their annual migration from Antarctica.

IF YOU DON'T HAVE YOUR OWN GEAR BUT ARE KEEN TO GO:

You'll need to hire gear in Brisbane; the necessary equipment isn't currently available for hire in Hervey Bay.

Rosco Canoes and Kayaks in Kedron hires gear out at a daily rate: Single kayaks \$75/day Double kayaks \$95/day

Kayak hire includes the boat, skirt, paddle, PFD (personal flotation device) and, if available, bilge pump and paddle float.

If you don't have racks of your own, they also hire out soft racks for your car for \$15/day.



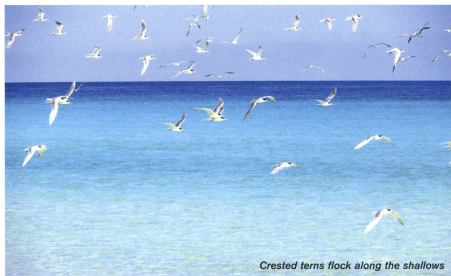
www.roscocanoes.com.au

OTHER TIPS:

- Learn more about Fraser Island National Park and purchase your camping e-permit at www.npsr.qld.gov.au/parks/fraser/
- Contact Volunteer Marine Rescue at Urangan to register your trip on 07 4128 9666
- Download a weather app such as WillyWeather to keep track of changing winds, swells and the tides. There is mobile phone reception along parts of the west coast.
- The midgets on the west coast are fierce – be prepared!!

conditions." Those conditions happen to include sunshine and high air humidity. He also told me they didn't occur very often. I guess we just got lucky. The fog limited our visibility to about ten meters, which felt disorienting and daunting. The heavy air seemed all the more thick with the sound of passing whale-watching boats, which presumably would have difficulty avoiding something they couldn't see. With little else to do, we pulled out the compass, set our path and paddled silently onward. As the minutes passed, so did our anxiety and as surrounding boats shut their motors down, there was a peace not afforded by the sunshine's activity. Ten minutes later the fog lifted and, much to our delight, we were still on course.

Having arrived at Moon Point with plenty of daylight, we continued north another five kilometres to the mouth of Coongul Creek. My friend knew the area well from her summers as a tour guide on the island, and had suggested camp spots with freshwater creeks and a consistent water supply. Being part of the Great Sandy National Park, all campers need an e-permit to camp on Fraser Island. We set up camp on the ocean side of the dunes with an endless view and plenty of casuarinas to hang our gear in, out of reach from dingoes hoping for an easy meal. Luckily, we didn't see any dingoes, only their tracks, and the sand flies we woke to on the second morning proved a far greater pest. After a short nine-kilometre paddle north we set up camp for two nights at Woralee Creek. It offered a perfect blend of creek, ocean, sunshine and shade, with cliffs of layered orange sand, stained from leaching oxides. On the third morning, while eating breakfast and watching the distant sprays of whale blows, we declared it to be "our whale day". With earnest and excitement we paddled the kilometre out, stopping about 100 metres from a pod of about eight whales. One hundred metres is the closest distance allowed under the Australian National Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin Watching. While most people observe these regulations,

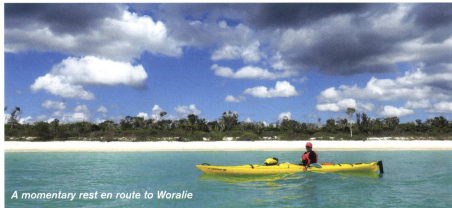


Crested terns flock along the shallows

a QPWS spokesperson admitted that one of their greatest frustrations is "ensuring boaties have done their homework and are aware of whale management approach distance regulations." They explained: "On-the-spot fines of \$569 can apply to persons who are not complying with approach distances."

We deliberated which way to paddle, not wanting to interfere with the whales' behaviour. Our plans seemed irrelevant when a whale surfaced on my right, followed quickly by another on my left. We were soon surrounded and trying to keep track of where they were seemed more hectic than the show of graceful tail flukes seemed relaxing. The confusion rapidly dissipated when one spy-hopped three metres off my friend's boat's bow. As it hovered there, with its head in a vertical position about a metre above the water, time seemed to stop and we took advantage of the rare opportunity to check each other out. It felt like minutes, but was probably less than one, before it graciously sank to whence it came. After about an hour of revelling in their company, with a mixture of adrenalin, awe and appreciation, we continued north on our day trip to Awinya Creek, eight kilometres north of Woralee.

We woke early on the fifth and final day and were quick to the boats to avoid the midges. Glassy water, a slight northerly on our backs and blue skies greeted us. Stopping along the way to chat with marine park rangers, we raved with huge smiles about the weather we'd had and the wildlife we'd seen. As we paddled the final stretch back, delighting in the sight of sea turtles that periodically surfaced, we reflected on just how lucky we really had been. Perhaps we've got the pelican to thank for that. **W**



A momentary rest en route to Woralee

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Tropical North Queensland

Travelling at night

Walking or jogging in the urban wilderness at night is great for avoiding traffic, but there are plenty of dangers to remain wary of.

The vast majority of Australians live in suburbia. Our cities aren't that large when compared to many other developed nations and elements of the natural world cut deep swathes into industrial and residential zones.

You've recently moved to the inner suburbs and discovered your home lies not far from a bike track that leads directly into the hidden leafy heart of civilisation. Without time to explore during the day, evening or early morning outings are the only option, but that means travelling after dark. Not one to be deterred, you soon find yourself wandering the fringes of two worlds. It's a borderland of electric lights and deep shadows, and who knows what those shadows may be hiding.

Crime statistics in Australia are readily available and often discussed in the media, however it's very easy to believe there's a much larger problem than there truly is when it comes to random assaults, theft or similar.

The National Offence Index can be used to rank offences over a given period of time. This is commonly how the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) aggregates data on 'principal offences', which refers to the most serious type of offence for which a person is proceeded against. By considering this data, the ABS is able to help monitor trends in crime statistics. For example, in a release dated 25th of February this year, the ABS shows that the number of people with a principle offence of sexual assault and related offences increased by 19 per cent during 2013-14, rising from 6,006 to 7,175 in the space of one year.

Despite this, it would be misleading to say that the rate of such crimes is necessarily increasing in public places and the data does not indicate this. In fact, principal offences in general aren't increasing in a significant way and the leading offence is generally 'public order offences', which is a catchall term that includes breaching public order or decency. It may include criminal intent, but it may just be the use of offensive language.

Ultimately this means that, while sexual assaults are often highly scrutinised in the media, the crimes you are most likely to witness – particularly in public places – are breaches of public order or decency.

Nevertheless, by travelling at night people become more vulnerable to crimes of any kind and some people are more vulnerable than others.

"Those most at risk include persons who are inherently vulnerable, such as the young and disabled, as well as those who don't pay attention to their surroundings," says Inspector Zorka Dunstan of Victoria Police.

"There's also the risk of getting lost or injured to take into consideration, or perhaps not knowing the best way to call for assistance if required."

Dunstan, who manages the Safer Communities Unit, is quick to remind us of the fact that people are often a greater threat to themselves than strangers are.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME

"Any activity may carry risks if not done safely, regardless of the time of day," Dunstan reminds us. "To keep safe, people should always consider the activity they are undertaking and the risks associated with them." This requires some level of pre-planning.

In the lead up to heading out your door, have a clear plan in mind of where you intend to go, how long it should take and what dangers may exist along the way. As always, weather and environmental conditions should be a significant factor, but in the case of urban travel you will also have to contend with vehicle traffic and potentially dangerous individuals.

Mark 'Mango' Mangles is a scout leader from Queensland with over 30 years experience in the military, including operating in confrontational environments.

"Anyone can be the victim of a crime if they happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, but you can take precautions to reduce the odds and make yourself a less likely target," he says. "Try to plan your walks in well-lit areas along proper footpaths where you can walk facing the traffic. Not only will you have a clear view of oncoming traffic, cars will also find it more difficult to pull up unnoticed behind you."

Most importantly, tell friends or family where you're likely to be and when so that they recognise when and if there has been a problem.

SHOULD THE WORST OCCUR

The cold air has lifted a fine mist from the river nearby, heightening your feeling of isolation as ambient noises become muted. Only the crunching of gravel beneath your feet interrupts the silence.

You've been walking for 20 minutes or so and the lights that illuminated the bike track at the beginning of your journey are coming fewer and farther between. With your eyes now well accustomed to the dark, you can see just how bright the reflected lights of the city are on the low-hanging clouds above. The sky is cast in oranges and purples – an alien nightscape has replaced the urban horizon.

The track winds around a bend in the river and the sound of traffic looms out of the mist. A bridge over the river carries the occasional nighttime car over the river, with the bike track snaking beneath it. Streetlights on the bridge create deep shadows beneath, turning the underpass and associated section of track into an inky abyss.

As you approach the shadow you become filled with trepidation. Peering into the darkness, you see a silhouette of the embankment beside the path rising up to meet the underside of the bridge, and it's up there you spot the cause of your fear. A huddled human figure is sitting high up in the incline. It's their eyes that have been making your skin crawl for the past few minutes – they've been watching you in silence from their gloomy hiding place. Your pace slows as you realise the extent of the danger you're in. "Do I continue walking under the bridge, or do I turn around and head back the way I came?" you wonder, knowing that having to turn around will take you longer to get home and that you may still be at risk of attack.

The vast majority of advice any survival expert can give for any situation can be largely classified into one of two categories: how best to avoid a problem and what to do should it happen anyway. In this example, our nocturnal walker is faced with an

MISSING

The tragic side of getting lost In July this year ABC News reported that the number of people reported missing in South Australia rose from 5,000 people in 2005-06 to 11,754 in 2013-14 according to figures attained from SA Police.

Missing persons can include situations from abductions to elderly person who has gone wandering, but luckily 85 per cent are found within a 24 to 48-hour period, according to the Australian Federal Police's national missing persons coordination team leader Rebecca Kotz.

"In Australia we do find 95.5 per cent of cases overall, which is a massive statistic in the western world," she told ABC News.

Unfortunately, that does mean that 0.5 per cent are left unaccounted for and even those who are found are necessarily delivered safe from harm.

URBAN GEAR CHECKLIST

Both Mangles and Dunstan list a few items to consider taking on nocturnal adventures, as well as some to consider not taking:

- A hiking stick or a pair of walking poles are not only handy in wet or icy conditions (and good practice for wilderness walks!), they will also make you a less attractive target to would-be attackers
- Wearable alarms are becoming readily available and are more useful than a phone to raise help if you find yourself in trouble
- A fully-charged mobile phone will help prevent you getting lost and should be used to keep family or friends updated should plans change
- Carrying a high-powered headlamp or torch will allow you to see in darkened areas, but can also be used to deter criminals by temporarily ruining their night vision
- High-visibility clothing should also be considered when walking or jogging at night

WHAT NOT TO TAKE

- It's increasingly common to see people listening to music while they're out and about, however headphones can lower your situational awareness and should be reconsidered particularly when walking at night
- Hide any expensive jewellery or watches so that you're less likely to be targeted for theft
- Likewise, while you may feel safer with your wallet and a small amount of cash, definitely avoid visiting the ATM at night if there are questionable characters lurking about

unidentified stranger in a relatively isolated location. The individual isn't a true threat, because as yet they've not made any kind of approach, threatening or otherwise. However, the next steps the walker takes could dictate whether a positive or negative incident ensues.

STEP BY STEP

1. The first thing to do in any potentially dangerous survival scenario is to take stock and assess the situation in a calm, collected manner.

"If you feel uncomfortable or threatened, consider calling for assistance if you're in a position to do so, or try to find a safe place nearby," Dunstan advises. "If you have planned thoroughly ahead of time, you'll have a good idea of how far away safety or assistance is and whether or not it's realistic to seek either."

"Ensure your would-be attackers know that you're aware of your surroundings by keeping your head up. Maintain a confident attitude," says Mangles. "However, avoid prolonged eye contact with strangers so as not to instigate a confrontation."

2. In the case that you are approached by one or more strangers at night, Mangles explains the most natural reaction is the

"fight, flight or freeze response".

"Only you can decide what the situation is and what you will do next. Breathe, think and talk – this is usually a good first option."

Mangles explains that attempting to defuse a confrontation by lowering your voice and using non-threatening gestures, while adopting a ready stance to fight or escape "The ready stance means you should have both hands up and in front of you. Your hands should be low enough to see over, but high enough to allow you to use them to fend off or strike if you're attacked."

Ultimately, avoiding confrontation is always the best option, so if you see a likely avenue of escape it's best to take it.

3. Only ever fight as a last resort.

If talking your way out or just running away aren't possible, then you will have to consider how to physically defend yourself.

Some people might think of jiu jitsu or karate when self-defence is mentioned, but everyone has a basic level of competency when it comes to protecting oneself that transcends set standards of martial arts.

"If you must fight, fight hard and fight dirty," Mangles suggests. "Kick, punch, scratch, bite – whatever. No rules. Try not to get angry, but go hard."

In a worst-case scenario, you may even find



yourself attacked unawares, with your assailant surprising you from behind. If this occurs, Mangles suggests using a defensive "shell" approach.

"Run your hand on the attacked side along the headline from the temple rearward, this will allow the arm to absorb some of the blows and help prevent you being knocked out."

If you manage to ward off the initial barrage, continue to maintain a defensive posture as you make an escape.

EXIT STRATEGY

You decide to walk directly on towards the bridge and the lurking threat in its shadows. The feeling of danger rises as you draw nearer, and you begin to run through multiple possible scenarios, none of which are very positive.

The shadowy underpass looms, but then you notice the narrow path – little more than a rabbit trail – that cuts up the embankment and through the trees on the near side of the bridge. It appears that mountain bike riders and joggers may have been using it as a shortcut to get down from the roadside to the track below. Seizing the opportunity, you turn off the track and run quickly up towards the roadside. Then, bursting out into the streetlight, you find yourself on a footpath

beside a well-trafficked road.

A few more metres down the road and the panic you felt has been almost forgotten. The incident wasn't bad enough to deter you from more nighttime adventures, but the possibility of a worse outcome has made you think a little harder about planning your route more carefully.

"People should feel confident enough to enjoy running or walking in public places," Dunstan says. "They can be safe, healthy experiences most people can take part in, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't have a plan for what you should do when things go wrong."

"In particular, you can find more tips on personal safety, including downloadable information on the Victoria Police Crime Prevention and Community Safety webpage."

No amount of preparation can guarantee you won't eventually run into trouble, and Mangles advises anyone who has experienced any form of assault or abuse in public to seek out assistance in dealing with the aftermath. "You should not have to deal with this on your own," he explains. "Talk to an advocate, counsellor, mentor, or trusted friend. There may also be a support group in your community, which many survivors of attacks find to be a beneficial part of their healing process." **W**

SURVIVAL EXPERTS

Mark "Mango" Mangles is a scout leader from Queensland. With over 30 years experience in the military including operating in confrontational environments. He regularly leads expeditions to developing countries and also works as a volunteer for a number of youth organisations, including Scouts Australia. Among other experiences, Mark leads World Challenge Expeditions of young people in developing countries, has wintered in Antarctica, and was the first person to summit BP Scout Peak in Nepal after it was renamed in 2007.



scouts.com.au

Inspector Zorka Dunstan of Victoria Police manages the Safer Communities Unit who provides advice to the community about personal safety and facilitates the development of community safety initiatives for Victoria Police. For further information and advice you can visit the Victoria Police Crime Prevention and Community Safety home page.



police.vic.gov.au



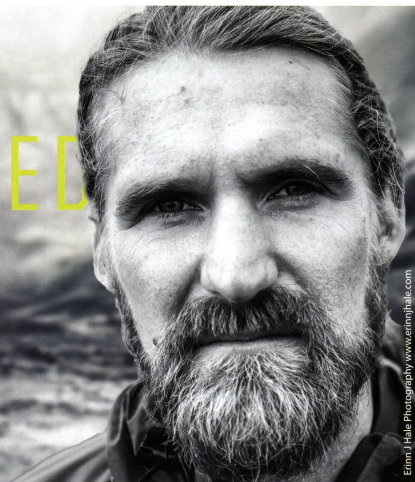
THE SCIENCE **ACR** OF SURVIVAL

I SURVIVED



"One of OAR Northwest's goals of our transatlantic rowing expedition was education. After our rescue we hope we can educate others to be prepared like we were."

- Jordan Hanssen
@OARnorthwest



Erin J Hale Photography www.erinjhale.com

Like Jordan and the crew of the OAR Northwest, more than 35,000 people have survived potentially fatal situations with the technology used by ACR beacons to instantly alert Search and Rescue. Read some of their stories at www.ACRARTEX.com/survivor-club



Paddling along your local river may be a quicker, healthier option to getting to work on time.
Photo: Inga Gilchrist

Beginner's guide to *kayaking to work*

Inga Gilchrist avoids gridlock by taking a more novel approach to the daily commute

You feel awake, you feel alert, clearer thinking, a fitter soul, a happy soul."

A meditation mantra, or a yogi's zen climax? Neither, just the simple rewards of paddling to work, from someone who knows. Australian kayak guide Rohan Klopfer has sliced through enough ripples to learn how potent a dose of the natural world can be in the thick of the urban grind.

"(You get) a good connection with nature. You're out in the elements and you succumb to the elements in the kayak. You feel the wind and rain and tide," he says. "Depending on where you paddle in from, you get to see parkland...to de-stress before your office work. Plus you'll get some strange looks from your

colleagues; rocking up in a boat'd spin people out. It's fun."

IN THE RIGHT PLACE

Australians may well be among the most urbanised people on the planet. We also cluster along the coast, usually near a river. More of us are living in apartments and townhouses along those rivers, docks and canals than ever. We also work. When you do the math, there's a compelling case for us to grab a paddle and commute – even just once – by kayak.

AT THE RIGHT TIME

If it sounds far-fetched to make your way to the office in the same vehicle that the Inuit used to reach their hunting grounds, take heart: the gear's come a long way.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- How far is my route? How long do I take to paddle that distance in training?
- In which season do I want to paddle?
- What are the seasonal weather conditions on my route, including wind direction? How will I contend with heat or cold?
- What will the sea state or river conditions be?
- Will there be waves? How big will they be? Will tides affect me? How will those factors affect my speed and fatigue?
- What will I do if I fall out of my boat? Can I self-rescue or will it be an assisted rescue?
- Where are my bail-out options? If it goes pear-shaped, where are my exit points, how would I get to the office and how would I recover my gear later?

Roof racks and trolleys have become easier to use and boats have become lighter since you last thought about paddling on a weekday. If creature comforts are your byword, add a gimbalised cup holder for your morning coffee.

There are two main types of craft to choose from for your glide to work: sit-on-top boats and enclosed craft. Both are suited to paddling to work. Sit-on-tops give you jump-on-and-go simplicity while sit-ins offer more protection from waves and wind. The hull shape determines where your craft sits on the scale between speed and stability. A long, narrow kayak will be faster, and more likely to tip. A short, stubby boat will be slower, and more stable when you're climbing in and ambling along. The more you spend, the lighter your boat and paddle will be. But you don't need a high-end craft to achieve your commute by kayak, nor do you need a specialised boat. The same kayak that you'll use for day trips, fishing, or multi-day adventures will be perfect for a short weekday commute: you can double-dip.

FLOATING THE NOTION

Knowing the answers to a few key questions before you put your paddle blade in the water will set you up for a commute-by-kayak debut that's enjoyable, not an epic.

"You always need to have options," says East Coast Kayaking operations manager Klopfer, "(when there's) wind, rain, fatigue, or you overestimate your ability or your craft."

If you're commuting solo, take all the precautions that apply any time you paddle alone: alert a colleague to your plan and establish when they should raise the alert if you don't show.

There's no shame in being caught unawares by conditions on the way to work. It happens to paddlers with the broadest shoulders. Canoeing Down Under owner, Terry Bollard, once paddled 12 kilometres to a speaking engagement after work and found the waves had got up a little more than he'd anticipated:

"I remember going across Perth's river and there was white water coming towards me," he says. "I was skilled so I was okay, but (when I arrived) I was pretty wet."

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE BEAR GRYLLS

If you can walk four city blocks, you can paddle a four or five-kilometre route to work.

"The bar is low," says Klopfer, "it's more

about paddling efficiently than fitness."

A beginner will paddle at three to four kilometres per hour, while a practised commuter can easily expect to cover seven per hour. Depending on how much you train, a five-kilometre commute could take you as little as 40 minutes. If the road alternative is in gridlock, you may be quicker paddling. Sydney paddle guide Patrick Dibben used to commute from Balmain to Lavender Bay and found there was no contest between a 15-minute paddle and a 45-minute crawl over Anzac Bridge.

Neither do you have to wait until work eases off nor hits silly season: "people who pick a five-kilometre route can expect to do a normal day at the office without feeling more tired than usual," says Bollard.

"It's just part of people's workload," he says. "It's more mental than anything else.

If you want to achieve anything you have to commit."

BUT I CAN'T GO TO MEETINGS IN A SPRAYDECK

If you've honed your technique and picked your weather, you're likely to stay dry. Depending on the season, you may be able to dump the sealed-wrists paddling top, spraydeck and booties, and paddle in the sort of clothes you'd wear jogging. The need for a shower after your paddle depends on how hard you go. If your pace is relaxed, you'll be fine changing into your work outfit straight off the water. Leave an extra day's clothes at work the day before, or bring them in your boat inside a dry bag.

Or, don't change. Dibben had a neighbour who slept regularly on her Lavender Bay yacht. In the morning she would hop on to her sit-on-top boat - wearing a business



A typically gloomy day in Melbourne still looks beautiful from water level.
Photo: Rohan Klopfer

SEASONAL ADJUSTMENT

In most Australian capitals, winter is the season when the water is flattest, making your paddle to work easier. Check with a nearby kayak club or shop for advice on local conditions.

Sydney: Paddling conditions are great year-round. In winter, take a hot water bottle with you for creature comfort.

Melbourne: Spring and summer are windy and hot. Autumn and winter offer more stable weather and calmer water.

Brisbane: Winter is the standout for less wind and flat water.

Perth: Summer is the choice for sunshine but windier and it can be searingly hot. Spring and autumn offer less wind and you can time your trip for a sunny, clear day.

suit - and paddle to the shore, where she'd lock her ski to a No Standing sign, slip on her high heels and walk to the office, the owner of Sydney's Natural Wanders paddle tours says.

Klopper says there's no need to be intimidated by the idea of paddling to work. "Adventure can happen in your backyard and it's best to explore your backyard before you venture further."

A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

Each city has its stunner paddle commutes, journeys that combine your shoulders' swinging rhythm with parkland, great architecture or permanent tailwinds. One of them might be right on your doorstep.

Sydney: Launching at Lavender Bay or Neutral Bay and coming ashore at Balmain or the Sydney Opera House are show-stopper routes in anyone's language. At sunrise, you'll have mesmerising light and almost no boat traffic on arguably the world's most breathtaking harbour.

Melbourne: Richmond to the city is a bite-sized commute of less than five kilometres that winds past the lush Royal Botanic Gardens.

Brisbane: Put in at Breakfast Creek or, even closer, at Norman Creek for a commute that's easy striking distance.

Perth: From Bassendean in summer through to early winter, a north-easterly will push you eight kilometres along the Swan into town in the morning, then you'll get the Fremantle Doctor pushing

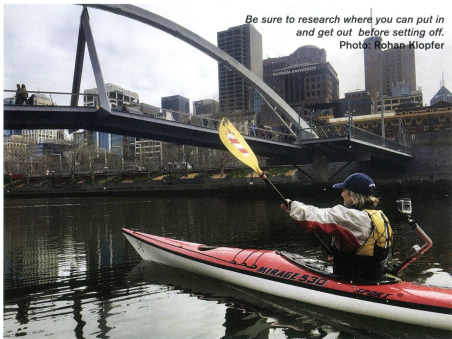
Setting forth in Port Phillip Bay.
Photo: Inga Gilchrist



you home at day's end: a commute that's downhill both ways.

Wild commuted from the top end of Melbourne's Port Phillip Bay along the Yarra River to the city. Having delayed 24 hours for calmer conditions, we put in on

Be sure to research where you can put in
and get out before setting off.
Photo: Rohan Klopper





a winter morning at Williamstown in the city's inner west. When the kayak took the weight and glided from the ramp, suddenly everything relaxed. In an instant, rolling out of bed at 5 a.m. had proved worthwhile.

Our road to the office was a shiny dawn mirror. V-shaped ridges fanned from the bow, distorting the clouds' reflections into psychedelia. Pushing past the marina, the rhythmic slosh of our paddles was the only sound. In a city of millions, a gentler entry to the jungle of the weekday peak would be hard to find. The rest of the day might be spent slaving over a hot keyboard, but for now my spirits floated along with my body.

LAND HO

Before you make landfall, you'll need a plan for storing your boat while you're working. One option is to fibreglass a bolt into your deck, and cable-lock the boat to a tree or post. Local councils' attitudes to this vary, so it's worth checking the bylaws, as well as asking for advice at your nearby kayak shop or club. Some local councils are installing canoe racks in popular landing spots. Trolleys that lash on to your deck let you

wheel your boat to the office, providing the distance is manageable. Some craft have wheels that fold out of the boat for land transport. If you've got a secure car space, consider parking your kayak there instead. Don't have a car space? See if a friendly colleague who does will let you hang your boat in ceiling loops above their car.

Check if the nearest sailing or angling club lets members store a kayak. Private storage exists, but can be steep. Kayak storage being built at Sydney's Rose Bay, for example, will cost \$60 a month per craft. Another option is to make your kayak disappear. Into a golf bag. Folding kayaks stretch polyurethane fabric over an aluminium frame. They perform as well as their rigid sisters and de-mount into a package that you can slide behind your desk. With practice you should be able to fold your craft in 15 minutes. Remember to factor in your increased transition time if you choose this strategy. **W**



www.nswseakayaker.asn.au
qldseakayak.canoe.org.au
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ph0zeAECtw8
blog.kayakshopaustralia.com.au

ADD TO CART

- Sit-on-tops range from about \$500 to \$1800. Sit-in kayaks start at about \$800 for a small recreational model to \$3500 for a sleek touring craft. Folding sea kayaks start at \$1700 and go up to \$4000.
- Paddles can be included in a package with your kayak or come separately for \$50 to \$500.
- Personal flotation devices (PFDs) designed for paddlers are priced about \$65 to \$350, while bilge pumps are about \$55 and a sponge to bail water is \$6. Check the legal requirements in your state for safety gear. If your kayak is a sit-in, spray skirts that seals from the deck to your waist are from \$60 to \$150.
- To wheel your craft to or from the water's edge, trolleys range from \$100 to \$150. For a bone-dry, flat-packed suit on arrival, expect to pay \$170 for a waterproof satchel.
- When you gear up for your commute by kayak, there's no need to get in a lather. All you need is something that you can safely and enjoyably propel to work and back. "At the end of the day, you can paddle a bath tub," says Klopfer.



Food from the fringes

A common pest found on the edges of the urban sprawl, *Andrew Davison* shows how blackberries can make for a quick, delicious dessert

It was one of those early Friday evening spur-of-the-moment decisions, where we threw everything into a pack and drove to a nearby track head for a weekend walk. Not far from the city's hum and rumble we began sweating up a slope and into the wilds. Soon, the clamour of the city was left behind to be replaced with only the rhythm of our

laborious breathing. We were now in the wilds and although they were not pristine, it was refreshing. Around us was evidence of a populated past in the form of paths, channels and, most notably, weeds. Wild fringes are often choked with them and on this particular trip it was too often the despised blackberry. On occasions blackberries are the curse

of the bushwalker as their spreading thickets bar the path through the bush. However, our path was clear through the brambles on this occasion and while it is a disappointment to witness such a devastating weed infestation, we were delighted to find small clusters of ripe fruits within relatively easy reach. With a potful of berries, we indulged in a delicious dessert that evening.

STEAMED COCONUT PANCAKES WITH BLACKBERRIES

This is a very simple and clean way to make a light and fresh dessert or breakfast that goes well with stewed blackberries.

INGREDIENTS

1 x 50g packet or ¼ cup of coconut milk powder
50g or ½ cup of rice flour
20g or 2 dessert spoons of sugar
½ teaspoon of baking powder
2 x 30cm x 30cm piece of muslin cloth (with a fine weave)

AT HOME

Combine all dry ingredients and pack into a plastic bag

IN THE FIELD

Mix approximately ¼ cup, give or take, of water (the amount of water will be dependent on the brand of coconut milk powder used) into the dry ingredients until you have a slightly runny paste similar to that of a normal pancake mix. Set this aside. Now half fill the largest (widest) pot you have with water, stretch both the layers of muslin cloth tightly over the opening of the pot and secure with a purpose made elastic (I make mine from old inner tube) or your boot lace, guy rope, the key is to

have the muslin stretched very tight across the opening of the pot. Now place this pot on the stove and bring to a vigorous boil. Once boiling, spoon a small portion of the mixture onto the muslin cloth; using the back of a spoon spread evenly, cover the pancake with an upturned smaller pot, bowl or the pot lid. The pancake will be cooked in approximately 40 seconds. Remove the lid and gently remove the pancake with the blade of a knife, repeat the process until all are cooked. Serve with your collected wild blackberries.

*Andrew Davison takes pleasure in the simplicity of being in the bush. A world traveller and culinary connoisseur, he has become a regular *Wild* contributor.*





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1 Moraine Plus GTX \$279.95

Scarpa's latest mid-cut hiking boot incorporates nubuck leather upper with a Gore-tex membrane. The rubber toe rand is shaped to protect the foot from accidental impacts. outdooragencies.com.au

2 Merino Fusion Long Sleeve Crew \$79

Incorporating a hybrid natural-synthetic weave, Wilderness Wear's new range of base layers are ideal for wearing in cold weather even during high-energy activities. wildernesswear.com.au

3 Stout 75/Amber 60 \$329.95

Gregory's top-loading pack design weighs in at 1.8kg, but its suspension will support up to 25kg in gear. It also features a full suite of pockets as well as a removable hydration sleeve. frontierequipment.com.au

4 Women's Ashford Active Jacket \$74.95

Constructed with 100% polyester this jacket offers an athletic design, multiple pockets and flat lock top stitching at the seams. Light, flexible and quick drying, it's ideal for wearing in changeable spring weather. gondwanaoutdoor.com

5 Vizz \$74.95

The new 205-lumen headlamp from Princeton Tec has three beam profiles and a waterproof rating of IPX7. Regulated circuitry also makes this headlamp lithium battery compatible. outdooragencies.com.au

6 Commuter JavaPress \$44.95

GSI Outdoors' popular coffee press has been updated to replace the plunger with a nesting inner sleeve as well as adding a ballistic cloth-covered foam insulator for coffee on-the-go. spelean.com.au

7 Swamp Cooler \$89.95

Help keep your dog cool in the summer months by soaking this Ruffwear garment in cold water, wringing it out and fastening on. frontierequipment.com.au

8 Ion Headlamp \$229.95

The smallest and lightest fully-functional headlamp from Black Diamond runs on AAA lithium batteries (included). Suited for ultralight activities and emergency use. blackdiamondequipment.com

9 MiniMo \$239.95

Jetboil's latest 1L upright canister cooker includes a new valve design and enhanced regulator diaphragm to provide superior simmer control right down to -6 degrees. jetboil.com

10 Men's Gairdner Eco Down Jacket \$184.99

This Gondwana jacket features a nylon outer and hypoallergenic insulation in a garment that weighs 840g (Size L). Includes detachable hood and drawcord. gondwanaoutdoor.com

11 Stainless Steel Pint Set \$54.95

Rugged, colour-coded drinkware from GSI Outdoors are simple to store and are designed to outlast any plastic cups, making them more environmentally friendly. spelean.com.au

12 Trail Guide GTX \$329.95

A versatile, waterproof boot from Garmont that incorporates a leather upper and metal structure while still being relatively light in weight. Suitable for any hiking activity. frontierequipment.com.au



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15 NeoAir Torrent Pump \$84.95

Therm-A-Rest's new portable pump is no larger than your fist, but will inflate a large NeoAir Camper mattress in less than a minute. Requires four CR123A batteries (not included). spelean.com.au

14 AF-S NIKKOR 24-70mm f/2.8E ED VR US\$2399.95

This latest version of Nikon's highly regarded lens now has built in vibration reduction. A perfect all-rounder for any amateur looking to go professional. mynikonlife.com.au

15 Growers Cup \$3.95

Micro-roasted, specialty coffee in a portable coffee "pot". Add hot water to create two serves of Brazilian, single origin coffee no matter where you are. frontierequipment.com.au

16 Pelican ProGear™ 2780 LED Headlight \$79.95

A 430 lumen headlamp at its maximum setting will yield 1.5 hours of light on its 4 AA battery set (included), but can be set on 'low' at 53 lumens for 12 hours. Waterproof rating: IPX7. pelicanprogear.com.au

17 Razor 50 Backpack \$199

Wilderness Equipment's simple, cleanly-designed backpack includes optional modules for water bottle pockets, tool racking and compression, as well as a removable hip harness and framesheet. wildernessequipment.com.au

18 UH515 twin pack \$149.95

High performance UHF CB radios from Uniden can communicate up to 10km apart. Featuring a backlit LCD display and auto battery save function in a lightweight design. uniden.com.au

19 LockN'Load \$380+

Yakima's new, robust roof rack solution includes a wind-diffusing load strip to minimise noise and is available in a huge variety of vehicle-specific versions. Arriving late September. yakima.com.au

20 Aeros Premium Pillow Regular \$44.95

A lightweight, inflatable pillow from Sea to Summit designed for outings where you can afford to carry an extra 79g in exchange for a better night's sleep. Packed size: 7 x 8.5cm. seatosummit.com.au

21 FuseForm Originator Jacket \$400

Designed for the active climber or mountaineer, this single-piece design from The North Face includes a helmet-compatible hood as well as handwarmer pockets. thenorthface.com

22 Backcountry Bed 600 Fill DriDown \$499.95

The Backcountry Bed from Sierra Designs aspires to provide the most comfort of any sleeping bag, but weighing just 1.1kg. Rated for temperatures down to -3 degrees. frontierequipment.com.au

23 Women's Lefroy Down Under Jacket \$219.99

90% duck down and 10% feathers in a nylon shell, chevron quilt design provides a lightweight, weatherproof jacket that's both highly compressible and warming. gondwanaoutdoor.com

24 ThermoBall Hybrid Hoodie \$280

The hybrid design of this hoodie from The North Face means the torso stays insulated while the arms remain mobile. Sleeve panels increase breathability during aerobic activity. thenorthface.com

Once considered purely as 'thermals' and only for use in the cold, base layer leggings and compression tights are now worn all year round in a variety of settings.

Whether or not you call them long johns, thermal pants or leggings, these basic items of clothing have evolved significantly in tandem with textile technologies in recent decades.

Originally worn as a warm under layer and predominantly fashioned from spun wool, leggings are now employed in a huge variety of ways (even in warmer weather) and can be constructed from quite a variety of fabrics. Unlike some technical apparel, leggings as activewear have moved into the world of fashion in recent years, with compression tights becoming de rigueur as casual attire in certain circles.

However, for the committed outdoor enthusiast, finding the correct balance between a pair of leggings that keep you warm while at rest but also cool and dry enough during periods of heavy exertion requires some careful consideration.

A NOTE ON MATERIALS

The outdoor athlete's love affair with merino wool is somewhat cyclical, and this may have something to do with the perceived economic or conservation benefits associated with natural, locally-sourced fibres.

At the same time, certain products are beginning to gain a lot of favour by trying to attempt a best-of-both-world approach by producing hybrid synthetic-natural garments. As our understanding of these textiles and our ability to construct them in a fit-for-purpose manner increases, so too does the effectiveness of hybrids.

- **Merino** – An old-faithful natural fibre derived from merino sheep; the resulting textile is soft, hardwearing and flame retardant. Merino is considered a super fabric for outdoor use as it remains warm even when wet, doesn't retain odours easily and feels softer the finer the wool is. Unfortunately, wool is naturally heavier than other alternatives and tends to lose its shape as the fibres break down with wear.
- **Polypropylene** – A synthetic polymer used in a wide variety of applications it has become popular in apparel due to its strength and lightweight characteristics.

It's not easily flammable but will melt when in contact with flame, so best avoid wearing near the campfire. Another downside is that it's renowned for retaining body odour, which is why it has started being replaced by polyester in certain garments.

- **Elastane** – Also known as spandex or lycra, elastane is a synthetic that is regarded for its exceptional elasticity. Used as a component of some apparel in order to increase the flexibility of the garment.
- **Bamboo** – Fibre derived from mechanically processed bamboo is touted as an environmentally friendly alternative to many other fibres due to the ease in which bamboo can be cultivated. It is considered to be highly durable as a fibre and may have some anti-bacterial properties, thereby remaining relatively odour-free.
- **Polyester** – Originally considered to be less desirable an insulator as polypropylene, polyester is a synthetic that has witnessed ongoing advancements in the way it is made. As such, it is now considered as good as, if not better than polypropylene due to the fact that recent iterations do not retain body odours.

Brand	Model	Gender available	Weight (GSM)	Materials	Price
I/O Merino	Chaser Midweight Tights	Both	265	96% Australian Merino, 4% Elastane	\$94.50
Ibex	Woolies 150	Both	150	100% New Zealand Wool	\$119.95
Icebreaker	Apex/Vertex Leggings	M/F	260	100% New Zealand Merino	\$119.95
	Sprint/Pace Leggings	M/F	200	96% New Zealand Merino, 4% Elastane	\$99.95
	Oasis Leggings	Both	200	100% New Zealand Merino	\$89.95
Le Bent	Baselayer Pant	Both	200	66.5% Bamboo, 30.5% Australian Merino, 3% Elastane	\$89.99
Marmot	Everyday	F	N/A	88% Polyester, 12% Elastane	\$85.95
	Interval Capri	F	N/A	86% Polyester, 14% Elastane	\$99.95
Sherpa	Merino Wool Pants	Both	240	100% Australian Merino	\$79.95
SmartWool	Midweight Bottoms	Both	250	100% Merino	\$129.95
	Microweight Bottoms	Both	150	100% Merino	\$89.95
ThermaTech	Baselayer Leggings	Both	180	100% Hollow-core Polyester	\$44.95
The North Face	Warm Tights	Both	180	57% Polyester, 43% Recycled Polyester	\$80.00
	Light Tights	Both	120	63% Polyester, 37% Recycled Polyester	\$70.00
Wilderness Wear	Merino Fusion Pants	Both	190	50% Australian Merino, 50% Polypropylene	\$80
XTM	Long Pants	Both	230	100% Australian Merino	\$79.99

TRIED & TESTED



■ Thanks to our test users from Melbourne University Mountaineering Club.

I/O MERINO

Chaser Midweight Tights

At 265gsm, this is at the thicker, denser end of the scale for the base layers trialled and our test group felt they were best suited to snow and alpine conditions. Even just on freezing conditions they may be considered too warm by some wearers if cross-country skiing, however one tester did find that they were wearable while going for a run. Due to their high merino content, they regulate temperature well and appear suitably durable. One tester found they felt a little itchy on the first wear, which is consistent with wool-based garments, however this feeling soon wore off.

IBEX

Woolies 150

A much lighter fabric at 150gsm, our test group found these were very thin and light for a wool-based legging. The waistband sat high, which is generally preferred by female testers, however all concur that the firm ankle band wasn't ideal, as it prevents the bottom of the leg being hiked or rolled up and would therefore need to be worn with thicker socks if worn within a ski or tall hiking boot. Suitable for high-energy activities and mild weather at rest. Made in Canada.

ICEBREAKER

Apex/Vertex

The thickest option in the Icebreaker range, these base layers are designed for snow and alpine conditions. One tester highlighted the fact that the weave appears slightly more 'open' compared to the equivalent I/O Merino garment, and this means they don't feel quite as soft. It's worth noting this might not have been noticeable if it weren't for the direct comparison. They also had a slightly shorter leg length for the given size and this should be taken into account when looking for a suitable fit.

Sprint/Pace

With a little more elastane and a lighter weight than the top of the line, these leggings may trade some warmth for versatility and are probably more suited as an all-rounder when it comes to activities in cold weather. Our testers found they didn't have quite the 'fluffy' feel that some merino leggings do and also had a slightly more relaxed fit for their size. May not be suitable for staying warm at rest in very cold temperatures, but this will depend on the individual.

Oasis

If anything the elastic nature of these leggings means the testers found they were comfortable in a size smaller than

they would usually wear, providing a more close-fitting feel. Despite this, they didn't slip down or ride up during use and the flatlock seaming prevented any rubbing. However, one user found that her pair had stretched a little after several wears, and this is a consideration for anyone looking to purchase wool-based undergarments of any kind.

LE BENT

Base Layer Pants

The general consensus was that this bamboo-based hybrid presented a good middle ground between full merino or synthetic leggings, providing a lightweight result that maintained its shape well and also didn't retain odours easily. It felt significantly different to woollen alternatives due to a smoother texture. One user reported that it felt cooler and drier during active use and therefore may be more suited towards active purposes rather than as a passive use garment. Ideal for the high-energy skier.

MARMOT

Everyday Tights

These synthetic tights could be considered as the entry-level option presented in this run of reviews. Less suitable for multi-day use, this garment was considered optimal for urban usage while going for a walk, at the gym or on the bike. A lack of reflectors detracts from its usefulness as outer wear, while a small pocket is an added extra for stowing keys or some cash in. One user reported the uniquely fitting waistband wasn't secure enough for running in and would need a drawstring to be more suitable.

Interval Capri

Very comfortable and include the drawstring their entry-level sister pair lack. Again, a small pocket is included and this time reflective elements have been added for use at nighttime. Our testers found they were suitable for running in at temperatures down to six degrees and remained comfortable throughout their test duration. The flexible nature of the garment also meant they were suitable for indoor climbing and gym use.

SHERPA

Merino Wool Pants

Another merino option on the thicker end of the scale, Sherpa's base layer competitor makes a fine option for staying warm around camp or even to be considered for skiing with on colder days. Those moments of shivering on a ski lift or while taking a brief break would be eliminated by the warming qualities of the garment. One tester found they had



a slightly looser fit than they would have expected from the size on the label, which may count them out for people looking for something to feel like a second skin. As always, best to try a pair on prior to purchase where possible.

SMARTWOOL

Midweight Bottoms

One user felt these were thicker and softer than the synthetic alternatives they'd worn in the past, which is in keeping with merino-based products. A thick elastic waistband holds them in place, but some users may find them a touch long in the leg. On a cross-country journey around Mount Stirling, one of our testers found they were warm enough to wear as her only layer on the legs, and they even stayed dry after taking several falls into the snow. Worth considering as a warm base layer option that can be used in moderately active scenarios.

Microweight Bottoms

Similar construction to the midweight option, these base layers are certainly better adapted for high-energy activity and should be considered as a layering option when real warmth is required. One of the testers found they felt smoother than synthetic competitors and were fine for use in exercising in temperatures down to five degrees and just below. Consider for snow and alpine use while working out.

THERMATECH

Baselayer Leggings

A light, synthetic weave means these leggings feel thinner than the others, while also being extremely lightweight. Designed more as a performance item of clothing rather than a warming base layer, they were comfortable to sleep in but would need additional layers in colder conditions. They also maintained their shape after heavy use and several washes. One tester found that, while the waistband was close fitting, the rest of the leg felt a little loose, which may be an issue with fitment for some users.

THE NORTH FACE

Warm Tights

A more snug fit and technical appearance than available in some of the competition brands, however these do offer a surprisingly different fit than the lightweight version in the same brand. In particular, the waistband sat lower while they also appear to be shorter in the leg. One user found they retained odour more readily than is ideal. A quick, gentle machine wash did help restore them to their original form. Certainly worth considering as an all-round legging in mixed environments.

Light Tights

Even thinner and lighter than The North Face Warm Tights, these leggings were very popular among our testers for the way they performed across a wide variety of activities. One user found they'd not changed shape after three weeks of regular wear. It's unclear whether these are treated differently to the warm versions, or simply their breathability helped the situation, but testers noticed the synthetic fabric hadn't retained odours after several wears.

WILDERNESS WEAR

Merino Fusion Pants

This hybrid merino-synthetic legging was also an instant hit with the mountaineers, as it appeared to uphold the best qualities available in both fabric types. They are at the thicker, more heavy-duty end of the scale and were therefore considered great for warmth and during downhill skiing, but some users may find them too warm for climbing in or cross-country skiing depending on ambient temperatures. One user reported some itchiness upon first wear, however this soon disappeared. Even better, the merino component meant these leggings didn't retain odours even after a whole week of consecutive wear. Finally, this is the only pair made in Australia.

XTM

Long Pants

A thicker, warmer base layer, our test group found these leggings were a little more heavy duty, which created a more 'constructed' feeling when wearing them in various situations, even with the flatlock seams. Thicker cuffs and waistband than some of the competition, these leggings would be considered better for anyone looking for a garment that is present while being worn, however might not be suited for an active person seeking a 'barely there' feel. One user found they also fit a little larger than expected, so again, it may be worth trying the next size down from what you might usually wear.

CONCLUSION

Any major concerns regarding base layer leggings tended to come down to fit, and this highlights the importance of being able to try an item before you walk out of the store with it. Interestingly, our test group pointed out several important factors in considering fit preferences for men versus women, and these were seemingly more than just 'fit for purpose' concerns. Women were looking for leggings that rose higher above the hips,

while all agreed more elastic ankles were necessary for certain activities. Any other consideration can almost be selected off the page, with the density and type of fabric dictating what activity the garments are best used for. If you're seeking something to wear while you're performing high-energy, sustained activities, consider a lighter garment, preferably in a synthetic-natural hybrid. If you need to be warm, choose a heavy-duty wool option.



Mount Wellington

Ricky French finds you don't need to travel far to have a truly wild experience in Tasmania



The lights of Hobart glitter through the trees at night. Photos: Ricky French

Rising over 1200 metres above Hobart, Mount Wellington is more than a backdrop for Australia's southern-most city.

The city is linked to the mountain, joined at the hip to the lower slopes and under the spell of the mountain's many moods. Indeed, to locals it's known simply as "The Mountain".

There can be no other place in Australia where civilisation and the wild are weaved so closely together. Wherever you wander in Mount Wellington Park you are within spitting distance of either Hobart or one of the many smaller settlements that nuzzle up to the mountain on all flanks.

The mountain is imposing without being pointy. It's sometimes unkindly referred to as "barn-like". I've not seen a barn like it. Whoever constructed this barn used 180 million year-old

dolerite rocks, injecting them through even older rocks and sprinkling the larger ones at will all over the surface of the mountain, creating caves and huge boulders fields. To the barn they added spectacular waterfalls, with spectacular drops into gushing rivers, crashing against towering dolerite columns; bald, rocky peaks, cliffs, trees that look like an octopus, secret huts, hideouts for bushrangers, the ruins of skating rinks and waterworks. The vegetation ranges from open forests to wet eucalypt forests, fern gullies, montane and sub-alpine shrubberies. From Hobart's early days the mountain was milked for its water, and today you can explore ruins of the various pipelines. In 1967, rampant bushfires wiped out everything on the mountain, singed every hair from its back. The bush

grew back, huts were rebuilt, the roads opened again and the mountain continued its ancient pastime of just being there. With little infrastructure once you leave the popular pads, it's the perfect place to discover your own adventure. Author Nicholas Shakespeare (no relation to the family that makes the fishing tackle, as he dryly points out in his 2004 book *In Tasmania*) calls the mountain omnipresent, '...in stern command of every street'. Charles Darwin amused himself on the mountain by chiselling out 260 million year-old fossils, while Emily Stoddart, in her book, *The Mountain: A People's Perspective*, talks of the stirring emotions the mountain evokes in those who live in its shadow, not all of those emotions glowing. 'Indifference to Mount Wellington is rare,' she notes.

ACCESS

Access to Mount Wellington Park couldn't be easier, either by car or public transport. With the majority of walks starting on the Hobart side, just 20 minutes drive from the CBD. There can't be many hikes in Australia where a suburban bus drops you and your pack off at the start of the trail, but that's exactly what happens when you catch the 45, 48 or 49 to Fern Tree. The bus leaves from Franklin Square in Hobart. Fern Tree offers easy access to all day-walks on the eastern side, as well as to the pipeline track, which takes you further afield. If driving, the most popular place to leave the car is at The Springs, 700 metres up the mountain. A good option to avoid summer crowds is to approach from the locales of Mountain River or Collinsvale.

WHEN TO GO

The area is accessible at any time of year, although winter can be extremely cold. Summer usually sees the mountain in a gentler mood and long days mean you can explore well into the evening. Snowfalls are common, and high winds and fierce storms can turn the mountain deadly in minutes. If embarking on longer walks or bringing children along, then the warmer months will hold a distinct appeal. Rainfall is fairly evenly spread throughout the year and not necessarily less in summer, with June having the lowest average totals.

WARNINGS

Most warnings centre around the weather, which has a habit of turning on unsuspecting walkers. Blizzards can hit at any time of year and low cloud and mist can make navigating the undulating tops into a confusing and disorienting ordeal. It becomes a very big place once you are lost. People have died from exposure on the mountain before, and despite appearing benign and having a close proximity to civilisation, it should not be underestimated. Ice can close roads and make driving dangerous. Campfires are not permitted in the park due to fire risk. Water is scarce, especially in summer, so always carry water. Watch out for snakes in the warmer months.

CAMPING

There are no dedicated camping areas or formal camping infrastructure in the Park, however rough 'bush camping' is allowed in the Natural Zone (and by permit in the Recreation Zone), and is known to be undertaken by bushwalkers, cross-country

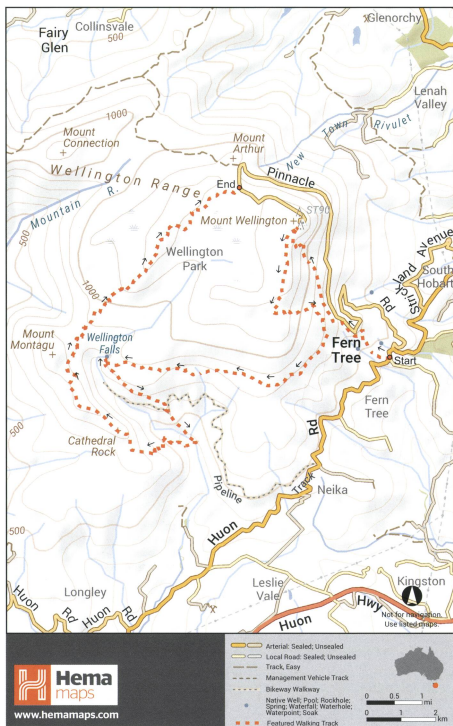
skiers, rock climbers, and participants in outdoor education programs. It is considered to be currently at such a low level as to have minimal impact on Park values. Permits have been provided sporadically for school groups to camp at Junction Cabin and The Springs. Existing huts are ostensibly for day-use only, however it is known that some huts are used for overnight stays.



www.wellingtonpark.org.au/assets/

MAPS

TASMAP Wellington Park Recreation Map 1:20000 will do you well. Signposts are generally good on the popular walks around The Springs and The Pinnacle but shouldn't be relied upon in the interior.





*At once close but far,
Hobbit through the trees*

MULTI-DAY WALK

The Springs to Wellington Falls

Wellington Falls is the most spectacular waterfall in the park and can be accessed via three tracks. If starting from Fern Tree, climb to The Springs along either Middle Track (steep, direct) or the more gentle Fern Glade Track. Alternatively, start with a pleasant amble along the historic Pipeline Track to Silver Falls and launch into a grunt up Reids Track. Those leaving a car at The Springs avoid the sharp climb and instead join the trail at Milles Track, a well-trodden and enjoyable benched track that sidles the southeastern face of the mountain and takes in views of the city and Derwent River below. The track becomes Wellington Falls Track and gets more broken up as it descends through the forest; you'll find yourself clambering over rocks and tree roots. Get used to the rocks, though, because at the bottom of the descent you're delivered to a wonderfully strange spot on the mountain, known as the Potato Fields. The 'potatoes' in this case are a mammoth expanse of periglacial rocks, looking like the remnants of a vast rock fall. Snow poles guide you up through the potato fields, which will test your balance, ankles and bouldering skills. Observant walkers may notice a track leading steeply up the western edge of the Potato Fields. This track takes you to South Wellington and Smiths Monument.

From here on it's back into bush and through a swampy area made more manageable by the provision of stepping-stones that keep your feet dry and protect the vegetation. The track gradually descends, getting steeper as it nears the North West Bay River. You'll hear the river before you see it, and thick vegetation and steep terrain means you'll only see it when you're right in it. A turnoff is reached to the Wellington Falls lookout (just a minute away), and to river access above the falls. It's worth taking this brief detour to the river – it's a magical spot with the clear water cascading over the world's slipperiest rocks, and an inviting swimming hole just a bit too close to the edge of the falls for comfort. Pink ribbons signal the start of a well-marked track on the true right of the river (easily crossed in normal flow). This track leads up to the Thark Ridge near Mount Montagu and is a good short cut to access that section of the track and cut out the grinding climb to Cathedral Rock that awaits for those who continue with the loop.

Wellington Falls to Mount Montagu via Cathedral Rock

After Wellington Falls the track doubles back

on itself and heads back southeast through bush for 40 minutes before arriving at the intersection with the Pipeline Track. Pipeline Track is a wide, well-maintained track that affords mountain bikers great access to the park. The next section is a complete contrast, however, as you follow a branch of the Pipeline Track down a steep, slippery ridge back to the North West Bay River. You literally walk on the old pipeline, a none-too-easy feat, at times akin to descending an ice-covered playground slide. The track flattens out at the bottom and crosses a small stream. Look out for pink tape that leads down a small bank to the river. If you start going up again you've missed the turnoff. This point of the North West River represents the low point of your trip (literally, not fugitively, or so I hope). Pick up the track across the river and enjoy one of the few flat, rockless areas of the trip. It doesn't last long, however, as you embark on the zig-zag grunt up Betts Hill. You'll reach the turnoff to Cathedral Rock one hour after leaving the river. The final scramble up is enjoyably challenging, but nothing too serious. The rock

itself offers scope for exploration depending on your head for heights and the wind.

From here traverse a fairly narrow bush-clad ridge, which makes for slow going. There are many ups and downs, large rocks to be negotiated, and almost comically impassable trees that grow just close enough together that you can't squeeze your pack between them. A short climb brings you out onto the rocky outcrop of Montagu Thumbs and the worst of the travel (on that section at least) is over. Descend to where the track meets up with Thark Ridge Track. A left turn here takes you west to Norris/Thurston Hut (15 minutes), a shelter built in 1991 by locals from Mountain River, an interesting detour. The turnoff to Mount Montagu is reached after descending through bush on a good track. The track leading up to the summit is not as well marked as the main track, but shouldn't present too many problems (again, look for the familiar pink tape).

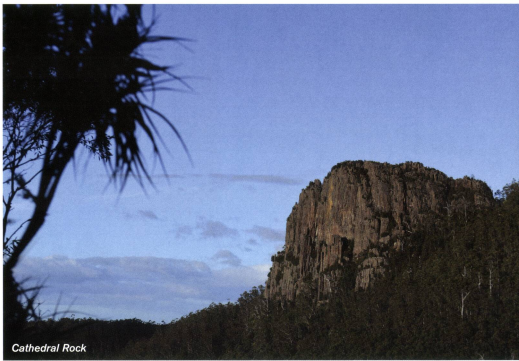
Mount Montagu to Pinnacle Road via Thark Ridge

The next few hours are spent traversing the

*Choose your own adventure:
Snake, Plains or Wellington Falls*



Snow held tight by Richea dracophylla



Cathedral Rock



Thark Ridge, climbing back up to 1200 metres and hopefully enjoying views across to the more remote western regions of the park. You'll have no problems following the track, but some diligence is required when climbing through rock fields, especially in low visibility. The experience is spoilt somewhat by an overgrown track, meaning you're constantly pushing through the bawera and low hanging tree branches. It makes the route almost out of the question for children, which is a shame because it's a fantastic route over interesting, but not too taxing terrain, off the beaten track. The route is guided by bright yellow snow poles, so you can enjoy the feeling of being in an area in the park not many people visit with the comfort of knowing the poles will guide you right back to the main road. After gaining the plateau, the familiar sight of the communication towers near the summit will come into view. Distance is misleading though, and there's still plenty of ground to cover, and in bad weather you're not out of the woods, even if at this altitude you are out of the bush. The track reaches a spot between two small knolls where observant hikers will spot a faint track leading off to the northwest. This marks a cairn-dotted trail down through a rock-band and over broad scrub-covered western face of the Thark Range, eventually linking up with the Collins Bonnet Track, from where you can head towards the peaks of the west (Mount Connection, Collins Bonnet, Collins Cap, Trestle Mountain) or link up with Big Bend Trail, which loops around brings you out at Pinnacle Road via Mount Arthur. In fine, clear conditions, with a spare couple of hours up your sleeve, this track makes an interesting detour, although it's not recommend in bad weather or impending darkness as the cairns and pink tape are allotted stingily and

you can easily find yourself off track on a broad, featureless plain where everything looks the same. Suddenly the comfort of the communication towers can seem a long, long way away. More than likely you won't notice the track, unless you're looking out for it, so continue back to civilisation, following an increasingly well-trodden pad until you see the novelty that is cars, driving up to the summit, their occupants getting their fill of Mount Wellington grandeur without getting their feet dirty.

DAY WALKS

Myrtle Forest to Collins Bonnet

A lesser-known entry point to the park, Myrtle Forest has suffered from vandalism and abuse in the past; a real tragedy as it's a



beautiful place to begin a climb to one of the more remote peaks. Myrtle Forest Picnic Area is reached via Collinsvale, 20 kilometres from Hobart. To climb Collins Bonnet and the other western peaks of the park follow Myrtle Forest Track south-west up the creek. Don't get confused with Myrtle Forest Trail, which heads east and crosses private property. It's a steady climb through bush before you break out into the scrub and join up with the East-West Trail, a four-wheel drive trail that extends through the northern reaches of the park. Turn left (south), pass the unnamed shelter (good option for a lunch break, especially if the weather's bad) and pick up the well-marked track that climbs to the summit of Collins Bonnet. This peak is the second highest in the park, only ten metres lower than Mount Wellington's summit, and offers fantastic views. From Collins Bonnet, either descend the way you came, or if time

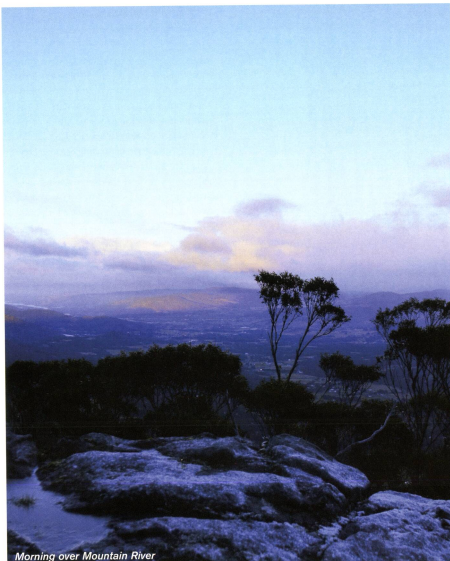


Fresh Snow on the Thark Ridge

allows you may like to take in the peaks of Trestle Mountain or Collins Cap. If Trestle Mountain is your aim, retrace your steps back to the intersection with the Myrtle Forest Track and keep following the East-West Trail north. The trail makes a sharp bend southwest and climbs around the Dhu Rivulet. Look out for the track leading up the northern face. Collins Cap can be knocked off on your way back to the picnic area if time allows.

The Springs - Mount Wellington Summit - South Wellington - Springs via Pinnacle Track and Ice House Track

A 'Pinnacle Circuit' is a fantastic, varied day walk that takes in the summit, heathland, rocky tops, a challenging descent and historic ruins. From The Springs take Pinnacle Track through mountain forest as it steadily climbs, offering periodic views of Hobart below. The track steepens as it zig-zags up the edge of the spectacular Organ Pipes (huge dolerite columns and the most striking feature of Mount Wellington). There are great lookout spots along this section. Care should be taken but in good conditions the climb is easily achievable by children and anyone of reasonable fitness. Reward yourself with a break at the summit, where an indoor shelter and information booth gets you out of the wind and the cold. Retrace your steps back towards the zig-zag track and look for the poled route of South Wellington Track as it meanders across the summit plateau, heading decidedly south. Care should be taken in misty conditions not to wander off track, but you should have no problem joining up with the top of Ice House Track, in the gully just north of South Wellington summit. If time allows, Smiths Monument is worth a visit and lies less than a kilometre away. Doctor John Smith was a surgeon on the ship Derwentwater and got lost while descending from the Pinnacle in 1858. The monument marks the spot where his body was found,

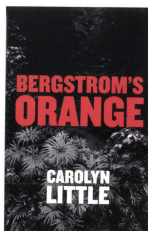


Morning over Mountain River

five days later. Robbers twice attacked the search parties as they searched for his body. These days, robbers are more likely to lurk round carparks rather than lie in ambush on alpine slopes, but the monument (one of several) is a reminder that the mountain, and particularly the weather, should not be underestimated. From South Wellington it's

all downhill as you re-enter the forest and follow the gently weaving Ice House Track to where it joins with Milles Track. You'll pass remnants of Ye Olde ice storage facilities, where Hobart's early (and hardy) ice salesmen would collect and store ice during winter. Turn left at Milles Track and come out back at The Springs. W

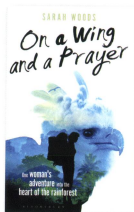
Prepared to explore.



BERGSTROM'S ORANGE

by Carolyn Little (Short Stop press, \$24.99)

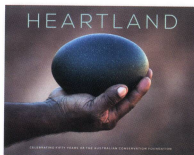
With a career as a Sydney-based science teacher, Carolyn Little became passionate about the Daintree after visiting her son in Cairns. By opting to write her first book in a fictional framework, Little hopes to gain interest in the plight of the rainforest from a broader group of readers, yet still manages to include a great level of detail and factual information nevertheless. The plot follows photographer and ex-ranger Jason McNeil, who comes to meet Nils Bergstrom, a Swede searching for the cure to a tropical disease that happens to occur in the Daintree. As the narrative continues, McNeil comes to realise there are greater interests involved in the rainforest, which proceed to manifest as the very modern concept of biopiracy. Little's writing is highly accessible and could be considered by any age group from young adults upward. For those who love Australian wilderness adventure and are looking to extend their library, *Bergstrom's Orange* is a clear contender.



ON A WING AND A PRAYER: ONE WOMAN'S ADVENTURE INTO THE HEART OF THE RAINFOREST

by Sarah Woods (Bloomsbury Natural History, \$32.99)

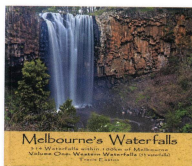
Travel writer and journalist Sarah Woods compiles her account of visiting the jungles of Central and South America in a non-fiction adventure story. Focusing on the world's largest and most powerful bird of prey, the harpy eagle, Woods draws together a wealth of information regarding the socioeconomic, historical and environmental factors that inform the rich tapestry of the areas that sits at the core of this book. Dangerous events recounted include the landslides, floods and even crash landings Woods experiences in her travels, while she also expends loving detail in describing the people she meets. Much more than a journalist's account of the plight of one species, *On a Wing and a Prayer* delivers a reading experience that transports the reader into the heart of the jungle.



HEARTLAND: CELEBRATING FIFTY YEARS OF THE AUSTRALIAN CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

by ACF (Echo Publishing, \$49.99)

Commemorating a half-century in operation for the Australian Conservation Foundation, this title includes 200 photographs that celebrate our oldest national environmental group. The subject matter is less about the group itself and more about what ACF has been trying to conserve for all these years. As such, the result is a book that expresses as many facets of the landscape as can be imagined fitting within the pages of a single volume. The photography is stunning throughout and focuses not only on the natural heritage of Australia, but also on the relationship Australians have to it, whether it be in an indigenous, agricultural or more urban sense. With an introduction by Michael Leuning, *Heartland* also includes features from the likes of Patrick White, Gillian Mears and Les Murray.



MELBOURNE'S WATERFALLS: 314 WATERFALLS WITHIN 100KM OF MELBOURNE BOX SET

by Travis Easton (Self-published, \$99.95)

Photographer and *Wild* contributor Travis Easton began researching waterfalls around Melbourne in 2007, a hobby that has since culminated in an exhaustive, three-volume set of hardback books. Each title is divided by region in order to cover every one of the 314 geological features Easton has identified. Using a definition that includes any drop of three metres or more on a mapped watercourse over rock, the adventurer has compiled a resource that can only be described as singular and unequalled in its field. Whether visiting Melbourne or born-and-bred, these books will serve to expose a secret side to Victoria's capital that few would expect to exist. While some of the listed falls aren't accessible as they lie on private property, many more could be considered for a weekend visit. The only word of warning: if you're keen on procuring these books, we hope you enjoy the classic font, 'Papyrus'.

Directory

The *Wild* Directory is a reference point for outdoors-related businesses worldwide. List your firm for only \$48 an issue (\$58 in spot red).

For more information, contact Campbell Phillips via email on campbellphilips@princecreative.com.au or telephone 03 9690 8766

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Copies of the following back issues remain, priced at \$8.99 each: no 1 (pocket-sized reproduction with plastic cover) and all issues from no 21 onwards, many containing free bound-in *RockGUIDES*. For full contents and to order, phone us on 03 9690 8766.

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Blast from the past

IN APRIL OF 1989, *Wild* published its 32nd issue that included a featured entitled 'Wild Japan' by John Morrell. While the story itself focuses on various skiing opportunities, here we see some fellows enjoying an 'outside bath' in the Tokachi Mountains.



WHOSE AD IS IT ANYWAY?

Answer in the next issue

Last issue:
Karrimor



While travelling the globe and pushing her cycling abilities to the limit, Kate Leeming is also working hard to raise awareness for key social issues

As a student I enjoyed cycling for fitness and always dreamed of travelling, but never imagined what I could achieve on a bike until after university when I travelled to the UK, initially playing hockey. It was there that I first tried a short cycle tour of Ireland. Over the next two years I pedalled a total of 15,000 kilometres through Europe for my personal exploration, from Spain to Turkey, through to the Nord Kapp, Norway, the most northerly point of mainland Europe.

Travelling by bike suited me because I was able to combine my natural interest in geography with my physical and mental strength, ability to focus, self-discipline, persistence, ability to work under pressure and competitiveness. Travelling by bike gives a close and personal connection with the people and the land, as well as an incredible sense of place.

After my Norwegian trip, just as I was starting to plan my first major expedition across Russia, I met polar explorer Robert Swan OBE – the first person in history to have walked to both the North and South Poles. It was Robert who inspired me to take it to another level. Ever since I have always tried to create some sort of benefit for the people I meet and places that I have the privilege of exploring.

The 1993 Trans-Siberian Cycle Expedition was a five-month, 13,400 kilometre bicycle journey from St Petersburg to Vladivostok to aid the 800,000 children of Chernobyl.

Accompanied by the UK's Greg Yeoman and five different Russian cyclists who covered various sections of the trip, the 153 day expedition was completed one day ahead of schedule, before the onset of the severe Russian winter and despite tackling a 1,500 kilometre swamp in eastern Siberia, where no vehicles could pass.

After spending a decade working and



competing as a real tennis professional, I returned to Australia in 2003 and organised the Great Australian Cycle Expedition (GRACE Expedition): a 25,000-kilometre, nine and a half month journey through Australia, 7000 kilometres of which were off road on remote tracks. The GRACE Expedition was a Demonstration Activity for the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

I had always been intrigued by Africa, but previously I didn't have the confidence to pull off a major journey there because of the overwhelming number of reports, mostly through the media, that it was a difficult and dangerous place. I have a passion for the importance of education and when studying a map showing levels of illiteracy across the continent, I could see a line of countries spanning the continent from west to east at the base of the Sahara Desert that were in most need of improved education.

While the physical aim of the 22,000-kilometre, ten-month Breaking the Cycle in Africa expedition was to cycle from Africa's most westerly tip, Pointe des Almadies in Senegal to its most easterly landmark, Cape Hafun in Puntland, Somalia in a continuous line, the real mission was to explore the causes and effects of extreme poverty and, specifically, what is being done to give a 'leg up' rather than a 'hand out'. I wanted to create a positive story about Africa, a story of optimism and hope, because no positive

action was ever inspired by negativity.

For many years I have dreamed of cycling across Antarctica, inspired by both stories of the explorers of the heroic age (Mawson, Scott, Amundsen and Shackleton) and by modern explorers, such as Robert Swan. As I learned about many of the poverty-related issues during my journey across Africa, I often felt frustrated and powerless to do anything about them and vowed to act to make more of a difference in the future. My motivation to take on Breaking the Cycle South Pole (which will be the first bicycle crossing of the Antarctic continent), is to satisfy my passions for exploration and education and as a humanitarian. The purposes of the expedition are to raise money and awareness for HIV/AIDS in Africa (via Charity Miles, (RED) and the Global Fund) and to run a global education program about leadership. I have several educational stakeholders primed to contribute once I can find enough funding to make this expedition, due to start in November 2016, a reality.

The Breaking the Cycle South Pole expedition will involve every continent on Earth, with the Antarctic crossing being the end game. I have planned a series of training trips and test runs to ensure I am physically ready, the world-class support team is prepared and the equipment and logistics will allow me to go the distance. This has meant facilitating the development of some innovative technology such as the first all-wheel-drive fat-bike, engineered by Christini Technologies, and custom made clothing from Mont, Australia. Sponsors to date include Australian Geographic, World Expeditions, Aldersley Capital and several equipment sponsors.



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*Breaking The Cycle South Pole
Photo: Phil Coates*

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